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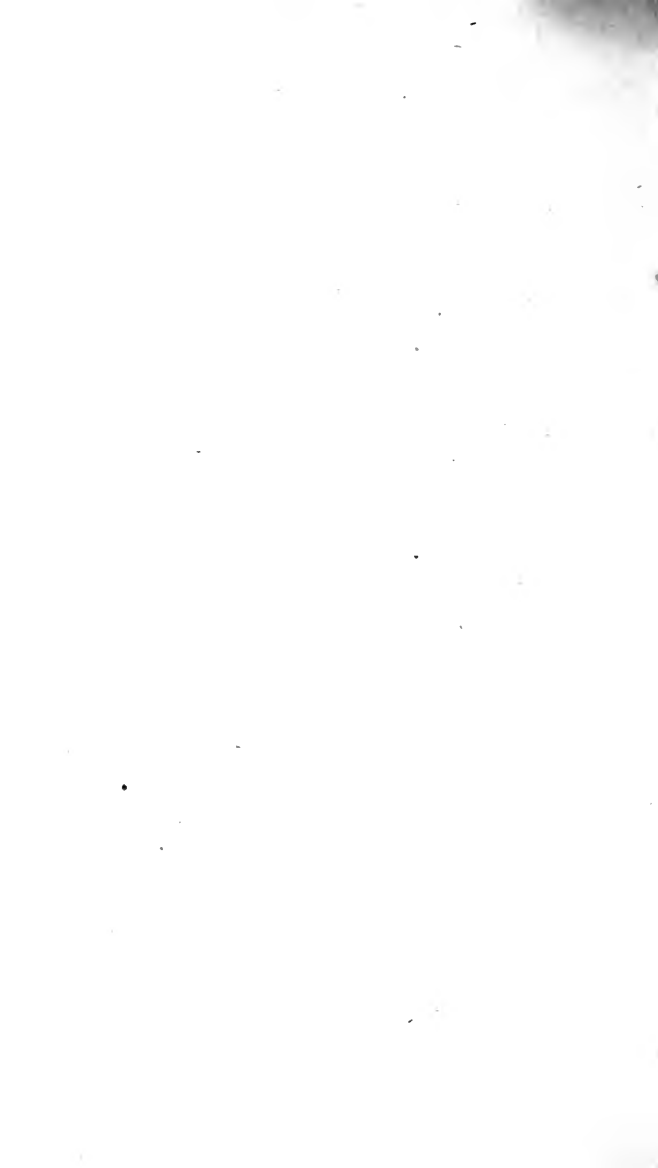
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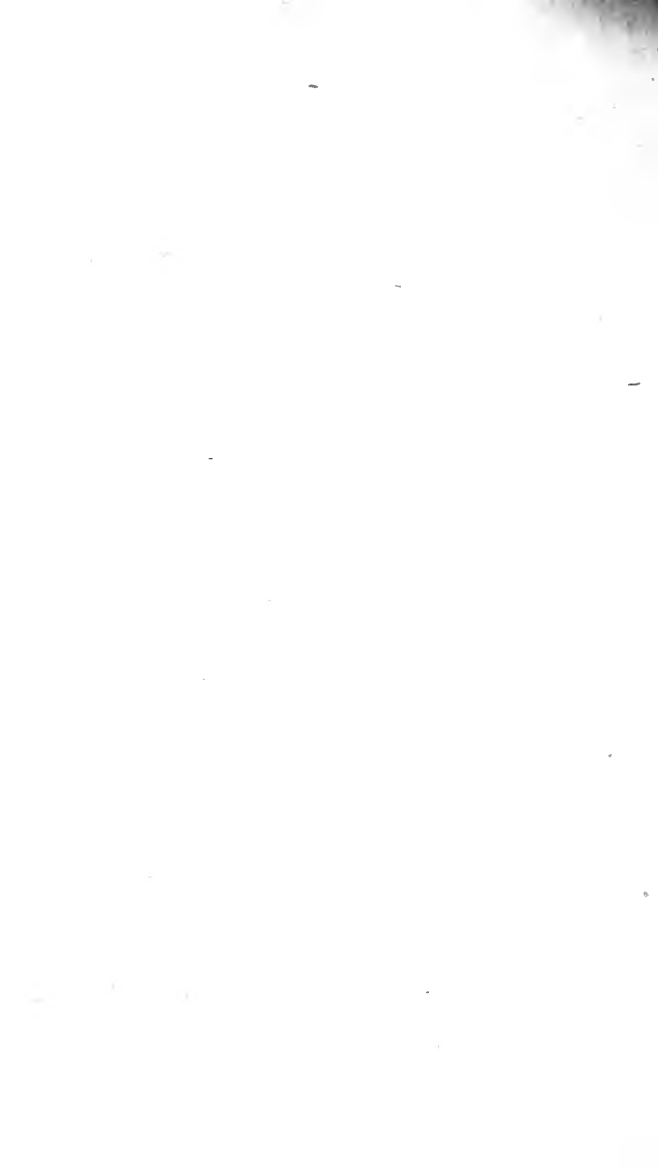
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L162



2 vols

Lyttelton







LA BELLE SAUVAGE,

OR

A PROGRESS THROUGH

THE BEAU-MONDE.

A Novel.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY

MR. LYTTLETON,

AUTHOR OF THE FOLLIES OF FASHION, LOTTERY OF LIFE, &c.

“ Quicquid agunt homines, nostri est farrago libelli.”

JUVENAL.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

PRINTED AT THE

Minerva-Press,

FOR LANE AND NEWMAN,

LEADENHALL-STREET.

1803.



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PROLOGUE.



DEC 30 1954 MARSHALL

The Reader is introduced to the Beaumonde.—A learned Dissertation upon it, which may be read or passed over.

WHEN a reader is introduced to a new subject, he is most frequently honoured with a preface ;—he has more reason to expect one when he is introduced to a new world. As we are about to do him this last favour, we will not detract from the benefit by conferring it in an imperfect manner : he shall have, therefore, a description of our new world.

A

In

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In the first place, as to the name of this world, it is called the *Beau-monde*, or the *fine World*, in contradistinction, and by way of marking its superior excellence above this common and vulgar world that *God* has made: and, to confess the truth, the distinction is not without reason. A certain witty, but rather blasphemous, I meant to say *fashionable King* used to wish that he had been consulted in the creation, adding, that he would have given the Maker some hints which might have improved his plan. The framers of the *beau-monde* seem to have profited by the hints of this Monarch; and the constitution of *their* world—the fine one we are now describing,

describing, has many considerable improvements upon the *old one*.

But before we proceed, we think it necessary to correct an idea of our readers. In the term we now make use of, a *fine world*, he is not to understand what is intended by that word in its general signification ; he is not to understand us according to the strict definition of his geography ; it is not a certain portion of dust and water, of light and darkness, of fire and air, blended and kneaded together into a round heavy ball, that constitutes this *fine world* :— by no means, for this is the composition of the vulgar world we have just been arraigning. The term

and difference are more easily explained by an example. When we speak of a very puissant, or Royal Family, we say the House of Brunswick, or the House of Stewart. Now what do we intend by this expression? Not the brick or stone houses in which these families reside, but the families themselves. It is in the same manner with our term, the *fine world*; we do not mean the world itself, but the inhabitants of this world.

Having now settled the name, we might proceed to the situation of the *beau-monde*; but locality is a thing that does not belong to it. The *beau-monde*, like the flying island of Laputa,

is for ever changing its place ;—it is now at London, now at Bath, now at Bristol, and now at Brighton. Wherever the Emperor is, say the Civilians, there is Rome—wherever fashion reigns, there is the *beau-monde*.

It may become a question whether this *fine world* was known to the Ancients. It has been the boast of modern times to have discovered one new world, that of America ; and it might raise us in our opinion to flatter ourselves that we have discovered *two* :—but I am much afraid this honour is not exclusively our's.

I have heard of strong arguments

against our exclusive acquaintance with this *beau-monde*. I would fain get over them, but I confess the passages are rather choking. Let us examine them, and, with as much impartiality as we can, discuss their separate claims to the honour of a first discovery.

But I should first premise that, as the inhabitants of Scotland are called Britons, so those of the *beau-monde* are called people of fashion—no matter, in either case, wherefore. Let us now, then, proceed to the Ancients. If we should chance to find any people of fashion amongst them, 'tis plain they must have been members of the *beau-monde*. Let us first turn over our Grecian

Grecian History. Here is a strong passage in almost our first page. The temples and statues of the Gods in the city of Athens were, during one night, all defaced; the streets were covered with the broken noses of the insulted Deities, and there was not one God in Athens that had not suffered some cruel bruise. This outrageous act was generally attributed to Alcibiades, a young Nobleman, a confirmed infidel, and a contemner of all religion. It was said that, with a large party of other young Noblemen, he had sallied from a tavern, and in a drunken frolic had committed this impious sacrilege.

What shall we say to all this? Here

is infidelity, insult on religion, tavern-fallies, and a drunken frolic—strong, very strong presumptions indeed that this young Nobleman was a man of fashion.

But let us examine him further. For this act Alcibiades was banished; and, retiring to Sparta, was received at the Court of Agis with every hospitality the Palace could afford. His easy manner, his gay wit, and a character so versatile as to take any colour, recommended him to the highest esteem and friendship of the King, and he repaid him by debauching his wife. There is now no longer doubt—Alcibiades was certainly a man of fashion,
an

an infidel, an adulterer, and one betraying the confidence of his friend, and repaying the greatest benefits by the basest ingratitude. Will any one further doubt that Alcibiades was a man of fashion ?

We have done with the Greeks ; let us now turn to the Romans. One day, in the presence of Julius Cæsar, a courtier was speaking with some severity against another ; but was checked by the Dictator, who desired him to spare him, for he did not deserve such reproaches.

“ Not deserve them ! ” exclaimed the angry courtier ; “ why, what think you

you of a man who was caught with his neighbour's wife?"

"What do I think of him?" replied Cæsar, calmly, "why I think him a very careless fellow."

A very fashionable answer, and an argument of a very fashionable opinion! Cæsar, beyond all doubt, was the *perfect man of fashion*.—If we want any further proofs of their acquaintance with the *beau-monde*, and their frequent exercise of its most valuable privileges, of their modish manners, their modish morals, and the whole system of their fashionable life, let us search the writers of their own times for information. Scarcely a page but
what

what will present us with what we seek—a person of *exquisite fashion*! Let us take up their Juvenal, and we shall meet as many men of fashion as in our own Court Calendar itself.

For instance, let us see how the Romans amused themselves. Here is the answer to our wishes—

“——Non oculis comitantibus itur

“ Ad casum tabulæ, positâ sed luditur arcâ.”

What do we say to this? Is not this an example of the true *beau-monde*? Can Sir W—— himself, or Lord C——, play with a more fashionable spirit?—One more instance, and we have done. Let us see their economy and matrimonial policy.

“ Cum

- “ Cum leno accipiat mœchi bona, si capiendi
“ Jus nullum uxori, doctus spectare lacunar,
“ Doctus et ad calicem vigilantibus fiertere naso.”

A very fashionable bargain, a very fashionable sleep, and every party concerned a person of the highest *ton*! What do my Lord and Lady, and a certain distinguished personage say to this? They will certainly acknowledge them to be people of the first circle in the mode.

It appears then, from this our very impartial examination, that the *beau-monde* is not the fair boast of later discoveries, but was equally known to the Ancients as to the Moderns. We are sorry that justice has wrung from us this confession : we would have wished,

wished, indeed, that the credit of the discovery might have turned out to be our own ; but truth and history are unfortunately against us.

But now to the subject of the following letters :—the intention of them is to lead the reader through the world we have been describing, to point his road, and to assist him in his progress through the *beau-monde*. They furnish him with a chart which may govern his voyage in all the variety of his way ; they begin with him from the very point of embarkation. He sees a young country girl, with decent manners, good morals, and a careful education, enter upon a fashionable course ; he sees her carried through the
different

different scenes of the *beau-monde*, and guided by a gay, seducing, and artful woman of fashion; he will perceive that the protectress understands her work, and is competent to her undertaking. She points out examples instead of giving precepts; and, presenting scenes and characters, leaves her young pupil to draw an unbiaſſed inference. In one word, and what includes the whole art of instruction, ſhe does not herſelf endeavour to teach her pupil, but leaves her more wiſely to inſtruct herſelf. He ſees, likewise, in what this progreſs of the country girl terminates; and my young readers, who are deſirous of imitation, have only to follow the ſame track to arrive at the ſame goal.

And

And the further to encourage them in attempting it, we have presented them with two characters, whose progress in this course of fashion, even in spite of Nature, may inspire the most liberal hopes of success. In the characters of Lord and Lady Varnish he will see Nature forced, in her own despite, into fashionable accomplishments. By nature they are both feeling and generous ; by habits of fashion they have exchanged all feeling for indifference. It is true, their feelings, particularly the softer ones of the lady, will often burst forth ; but fashion again interferes, renews her broken bar, and recalls them once more to their apathy and indifference.

Let

Let this produce the effect we have intended. Should any readers be troubled by similar virtues—should their minds be equally kind and benevolent, and therefore equally unfitted to fashionable accomplishments, let them not on that account despair—let them start on the course of fashion, and they will soon overcome the restraints of what is called *virtue*.

It only remains to add one thing more. The story, for the most part, is true—many of the characters are living ; and the reader, if acquainted with what is called *high life*, may easily recognise them.

LA

BELLE SAUVAGE.



LETTER I.

Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

DEAR FRAIL,

TEN thousand thanks to the dear seasons that have again brought round the month of October. It is this month that concludes the hated, though necessary period, during which Fashion banishes her votaries from her true seat, the capital, and condemns

them to a detestable penance in the fields and woods of the country. Horrid fields!—abominable groves!—This, you will say—or rather, like all correspondents, I will say for you, is no very poetical address. You are right, my dear—it is not so. The country and all its inhabitants are my rooted aversion. It may suit a native Squire, a dunned Poet, or a retiring Alderman; but I am a woman of fashion, and have nothing to say to either of them.

The country is to me a necessary exile, and an escape from it a return to pleasure, splendour, and happiness. In short, I came to it with as much ill-humour as I went to my bed, when another of those vile necessities, which trouble women of fashion in common with their vulgar inferiors, obliged me to give his Lordship an heir; and I shall now leave it with as much pleasure as I then left my nursery,
and

and returned from the duties of a mother to the poignant delights of a fashionable life.

Congratulate me, my dear Frail, that the time of departure is now at hand. I shall leave this place in a few days: I shall have time, however, to write you two or three letters before this event; and as I love you, I shall certainly have the charity to continue my correspondence even when returned to London.

Your disagreeable affair will prevent your coming amongst us this season—but keep up your spirits, my dear; they will talk of it but for a time, when some new adventure of the same kind will arise, and divert their scandal into another channel. Malice must always have a victim; but I have observed this difference between fashionable malice—I mean the malice of a London drawing-room, and

the vulgar backbiting of a country neighbourhood. The one is content to teaze, torment, and play with its unfortunate object—the other is a bloody demon, and demands a complete sacrifice. I wish you could only hear how our country ladies treat each other's weakneſſes. I have heard a harſher conſtruction put upon an innocent whiſper, than our moſt malignant ſcandal-loving coteries would affix to a maſquerade aſſignation. Take my advice, my dear, and ſupport your ſpirits—Scandal muſt have a victim; but it is her delight, like that of the Priests of old, to offer up on the altar the moſt pure and unſpotted one. The affair will ſoon blow over, and you may again return to your element.

Some few prudes, perhaps, who envy you your charms and your gallant, may gratify their spleen by reminding the world of your
faux-pas,

faux-pas, when it has good-naturedly forgiven and forgotten it. Such you know there are in all societies, who affect freezing and distant looks to their frail friends, and from their slips draw arguments of self-congratulation; “happy,” as they say, “in their own good fortune, in not being that weak, wretched, undone thing, a *beauty*!”—All frivolous pretence, my dear! A handsome woman, I grant you, is subject to temptations, and, like good Queen Emma, is perpetually walking over burning ploughshares. Then those odious opportunities, as the men call them—such as visits to milliners, jaunts to Windsor and Hampton Court, besides saunters in the Park by moonlight, and Ranelagh assignations; these, I confess, afford strong instances of a fine creature’s frailty:—but not to wish to be handsome for fear of being undone——pshaw, child! it

would be as unreasonable not to wish to have been born, because we must one day be old. Youth and beauty were Nature's best gift, and meant for enjoyment; and those that suffer them to rust and spoil in their possession, are guilty of contradiction to her sovereign will and pleasures.

I am summoned to supper. Good-night, dear creature!—I will write again to-morrow, and do all in my power to relieve your present dejection. Again good-night, and believe me

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER II.

From the same to the same.

I HAVE just seen a friend of your's, who had the charity to turn his horses' heads towards Clarebrook, and pay me a morning visit. Can you guess who it is? I defy you, my dear.—Why then, to relieve you at once, and perhaps to relieve myself by telling you—(for the eagerness to tell a secret is sometimes equal to that of hearing it)—my visitor was no other than the charming man himself! Yes, the object of your late levity—the source of your present banish-

B 4

ment—

ment—the envy of all imitating coxcombs, the aim of all rising toasts—the gallant, gay Lothario—Sir Harry Loveday ! Do you tremble, sigh, or blush ? But I forget, my dear—you are a woman of fashion, and are therefore exempted from every feeling of nature. Nature may rise in the cheeks as she rules in the hearts of these country ladies ; but as the habits of fashionable life so effectually banish her from our hearts, we have ourselves had the prudence to drive her from our faces. To give you a single instance :—how often are we under a necessity of professing what we do not mean ; in other words, and perhaps such as a surly moralist would use, how often must we profess an absolute l—e. Now if we could not do this without a blush, to how many inconveniences would the forms of fashionable life subject us !—But enough of this.

I gave

I gave my visitor a most hearty welcome. I was eaten up with spleen before his arrival, and contriving how to kill the lagging day. I was as melancholy as the great clock in our hall—or, rather, I was like it. I had nothing now to do but count the time; whilst my former occupation was to kill it. And is it not reasonable, as a great wit has observed, to pay time in its own coin, and destroy that which destroys everything else?—But to Sir Harry.

After some previous bows, &c. &c. I put a piece of civil restraint upon him; and exercising a species of hospitality I had learned in Ireland, ordered his horses to be locked up in the stable, and compelled him to stay dinner, and pass the day. He was in great spirits, and, to use a pretty strong metaphor, his wit was beaming as the sun; and, in spite

of the odious foliage that stood opposite our dining-room windows, his elegant and sprightly merriment made me imagine myself already in St. James's Square. I made him repeat to me the whole of your affair, and he told me some circumstances of which I was before ignorant. He says your husband, the Colonel, followed you and himself to your milliner's, Mrs. Etching, and that he burst in upon your conversation while Sir Harry was upon his knees. You, of course, fainted. They fought. Sir Harry was desperately wounded, and the Colonel left you with a tragical and ridiculous threat that he would never return—"No never, Madam, shall you see me again!"

Is it possible, my dear, he could have made himself so ridiculous? I really thought he
had

had been more the man of fashion than to give into any of these foolish energies; and the *beau-monde* has hitherto been in a great error, and bestowed upon him the credit he little deserves, of having borne his misfortune with a truly fashionable indifference.—My Lord Lounge, who has the most facetious knack at improving a story, tells every thing to the credit of the Colonel. He says that, on perceiving the interruption he had been guilty of, your husband bowed, and begged pardon for an intrusion on a party to which he was not invited; but as he had long owed a grudge to Sir Harry for rivalling him with a favourite Opera-dancer, under the pretended feelings of an injured husband, he took an opportunity to gratify the spite of a piqued lover, and bade the Baronet draw. Sir Harry, perceiving him in a bantering

humour,

humour, and being himself in a state of equal good temper, would have excused himself, and turned the matter off in that tone of raillery which the Colonel seemed to assume. Your husband, however, insisted on satisfaction ; but preserving an inimitable *sang froid* even in his obstinacy, added, in a rallying tone, “ that he had laid a bet he would kill a man before he went to bed, and he could not lose so fair an occasion of winning his wager.”

This was Lord Lounge’s story. Whether true or not, I confess I prefer it to Sir Harry’s : it sets the Colonel in a better light—it shews him possessed of those distinguishing characteristics of a man of fashion—a pleasant indifference, and a habit of elegant levity in affairs generally esteemed of the most serious nature.

I have

I have now got the truth out of Sir Harry. I wrote the former part of my letter while he was at his wine. The Clergyman of the parish dining with us, and Sir Harry being amused with the novelty of his character, they remained at table till seven o'clock, when I summoned them to their coffee. I received them with the reprimand they so well merited, for the exclusive entertainment they had afforded each other, and their polite remembrance of me. Sir Harry diverted it with his usual address; and a kind of archness in his eye explained to me that he had made the use I expected of the honest Clergyman.

But I almost forgot to tell you what I hinted at in the beginning of this passage. Sir Harry has confessed that Lord Lounge's story is the true one, and his own only a fair ridicule. But it seems your
husband

husband has left you, and taken away with him his dear Opera-dancer. Peace be with him!

We amused ourselves during the evening with the humours of our honest and really agreeable country preacher. But I will not give you any of the conversation, since he has invited us to dine with him on Friday next, as I propose leaving the country on the Saturday. You shall have a description of our visit, and our worthy host shall be drawn in full length. This is Wednesday; I shall write, therefore, only two more letters to you before I reach town. How delightful is the idea that my exile will so soon be ended!—that a few days will transport me to the regions of gaiety and pleasure! I shall again lead in the ball-room, and shine in the rout, faint with ecstasies at an Opera, and perhaps

visit the vulgar playhouse on my dancing-master's benefit. But a truce with these raptures. The country, after all, is in some degree necessary ; it revives one's spirits when too much jaded by dissipation, and qualifies us, by a course of temporary abstemiousness, for the fatigues of a new winter-campaign.—But I am swelling my letter to an unusual length, and must put an end to our mutual fatigue, by assuring you that I am

Your's most sincerely,

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER III.

Lady Varnish in Continuation.

CONFESS, my dear—don't I tire you to death with my scrawl. I will continue it, however, at the hazard of giving you a fit of the spleen. The visit to our country Rector is paid, and is well worth description. Have you any taste for simplicity and nature? There was a time, my dear Frail, when we both had a portion, the least spice of which in our present condition would be esteemed folly and romance. Now then for a rural scene,

scene, ancient simplicity, and a village dinner.

About three o'clock Sir Harry and myself in a sociable drove for the Parsonage, and the distance being but three miles, we soon reached it. The honest Rector came out to hand me from the vehicle, and I rejected Sir Harry's assistance for that of his honest rival. He conducted us immediately into the house, though Sir Harry delayed a few minutes at the gate, and expressed his admiration at the neat elegance of the Parsonage : it was really of a most striking simplicity. Conceive one of those cottages you have often seen in a fancy landscape, seated on the brow of a small hill, and this hill green as an emerald ; conceive its walls clothed with grape-vines, and its windows scarcely visible through the embosoming foliage ; in short, conceive

conceive swallows' nests, a thatched roof, and the lawn in which it stands enclosed into a kind of snugness by the surrounding shrubbery, and you will have some image of this elegant Parsonage. He conducted us into a parlour at the back of his house.—“ I dine,” said he, “ when alone, at two o'clock; but as you are people of fashion, I shall shew my breeding by keeping you waiting till four. We have half an hour yet then :—will your Ladyship walk in my garden ?”

We readily accepted his invitation, and followed him through a glass door into the lawn. The garden was as striking as the house : it was very long—two high walls on the east and west, his house on the north, and a stream of water on the south end, contained it. The walls, however, were entirely concealed by trees, shrubs, or vines.

By

By these boundaries it was enclosed from the country without ; and being narrow enough to give the idea of snugness, without being so much so as to have an air of huddle or confinement, it presented the most perfect image of retirement and village security.

By how strange and inexplicable a chain are our thoughts linked together, and with how gentle a touch do the chords of the heart vibrate ! The tranquil beauty, the calm security, the air of peace and innocence in this village retirement, recalled to my mind the memory of distant days, when I would take in my hand one of my favourite Romances, and throwing myself under some overshadowing tree, would fall into an insensible sleep ; and following my fancy in its fairy roving, dream of love and rapture in a scene like this. Oh Frail ! I once had feeling ! Dear girlish days, why are you
so

so soon fled? Days of innocence and nights of rest, are you indeed fled for ever!—and for what have I exchanged you?

Dear Frail, excuse my nonsense;—what a strange heart have I! I wrote the preceding passage, would you believe it, in tears! Some levity has since succeeded, and I am now laughing at my weakness. How stupid is that rule of pedantry which affixes what it calls a distinguishing trait to every character, and decides against all variation from it as unnatural contradiction!—It is remarked that historians never err more than in giving a character: they make no allowance for humour and caprice, but impute the most trifling actions to deep and secret causes. If a King is out of humour, he has discovered a plot, though he is all the time, perhaps, fretting at his cook or his mistress:

in

in short, they would fix a man to the straight path, and condemn those deviations which are more natural than a perpetual consistency, as frivolous and absurd.—But where am I running to? I hate argument. Let any one take the sentiment, and make the most of it. How I have wandered! I intended to describe a visit, and have run into a stupid episode of Fairies and oak-trees, love and days of peace. But to recover my subject.

After our honest host had shewn us his flowers, his choice of pinks and tulips, his beds of violets, moss-roses, &c. &c. a humour that is one of his foibles, he asked Sir Harry if he were not sensible of the pleasures of a flower-garden.—“And your Ladyship,” said he, “is not so refined, I hope, as to stop your nose at a violet, or catch a head-ache from gazing at a rose?”

I replied

I replied, that it was rather a complaint against wealth and grandeur, that it could not multiply the senses; not that it deprived us of the use of those we already had.—“Well then,” he added, “those that enjoy them in full perfection, must delight in a garden. Your Ladyship will forgive my using the name of a philosopher; but Aristotle observes, that the poet is most pleased with his works because he calls, as it were, *new creatures* into being. To plant and raise flowers is, by the same logic, to make a *new creation*! Now, the highest compliment we can pay to your sex, is to dress you finely; we should bestow, therefore, one of the same kind on the mother earth, and shew our gladness for the fertility she gives us, by planting nosegays in her bosom.”

We were now summoned to dinner, and
sat

fat down to a table as hospitable as neat. I do not know whether it was owing to its novelty, but I relished the simple boiled mutton, the turnips as white as the table-cloth, and the homely apple-pudding, more than I ever did the most fashionable dinner. He made us no apology for the plainness of our entertainment, but turned it into a compliment in a manner of some elegance. —“ I have not given you a fashionable dinner,” said he, “ because I could then have only given you what you could better have at home, nor could I have furnished a dish which you have not tasted before ; but in a country dinner you will at least find one dish to your taste—that of novelty ; and I am happy to see that you, Sir Harry, do it so much honour.”

He had reason in what he said, for Sir
Harry

Harry really astonished me, so heartily did he relish his dinner. He had the appetite of a schoolboy in the holidays ; and the old housekeeper chuckled to see so fine a man eat so much of her apple-pudding.

The dinner over, our host, having first said grace, rose from table, and desired us to follow him into the garden. We obeyed, and he led the way to the middle of it, where was a raised mound, covered with green turf, and on it a kind of arbour around a low oak-tree, which arose from its middle. Here a deffert of filberts, apples, pears, and other fruit was prepared for us, and set out with a neat taste on a table covered with a green cloth. From the arbour we could command the whole of the garden, from the house at the top, to the stream at the bottom ; and as the
afternoon

afternoon was very fine, you can imagine nothing more pleasant. An odd comparison came into my head. The simple and respectable figure of our host eating dried fruits under an overhanging oak, made me for a moment draw a resemblance between him and one of the ancient patriarchs; and I could think of nothing but Abraham under the palm-tree. The sight of the water still improved the thought, and I was expecting to see a Sarah come up from it with a pail. There is certainly, my dear, something delightful in simplicity; the thought took up my whole mind, and I almost sighed that these were not patriarchal days. Could you have thought that I had a heart capable of such variety of feeling? Yet once I had indeed sensibility, and how was it misused! You shall know some time or another, Frail.

We returned to the house to our tea, and almost immediately afterwards drove home. I have just written the following letter to my Lord ; and as every information will be charity, and you are kind enough to say you read to the end of my letters, I will copy it out for you.

To my Lord Varnish.

“ MY DEAR LORD,

“ The winter has again come round, and with it the necessity of my return to town. I only want the wings to fly—you will, perhaps, say to flutter ; and it is in your Lordship’s power to furnish them, by transmitting me some orders on your banker. With your permission, my Lord, I shall
take

take a share in Lady Shuffle's Faro Bank : I think it will turn to *account*—a word I have just learned by a letter from your steward, who says the rents are all paid, and that he has no money in hand to send me. I believe he is a rogue, my Lord ; he goes to Church twice on Sundays, and has taken an odd whim into his head to instruct the psalm-fingers of the village. Heaven knows they want it !—for I have never endured the Church since I last heard them. This stupid stuff is all this stupid village can furnish me with to write to you.

“ Pray, my Lord, let me know your own affairs—how your electioneering goes on, and whether you are likely to succeed. Does my uncle Sir Hilary give you all the support he promised ? I suppose you must drink yourself blind to please the brutes. It is

rather whimsical, methinks, that a man must lose his reason before he can become a Member of Parliament ; but the misfortune of it is, to judge at least by the conduct of most of them, that they never recover it during their whole sitting. I beg pardon for troubling you with this letter, for I suppose the tumult of an election takes up all your time. Adieu, my Lord—but do not forget the orders ; for I purpose to set off for London in a few days.

“ I am, my Lord, &c. &c.”

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

MY DEAR FRAIL,

AS I shall leave the country at the end of the week, I shall trouble you with this, and perhaps another letter before my departure. You desire me to write with more particularity ; but such is the barrenness of all subject-matter in a country neighbourhood, that the instance of my compliance would lead you to repent your too hasty demand.

demand. In this letter, however, I can promise you more entertainment than I fear you have found in any of my preceding.

Being at breakfast this morning with a lady of fashion in my neighbourhood, after observing on the uncommon fineness of the season, and the unusual brightness of the day, she proposed a visit to a lady in our vicinity.—“She is a widow,” said she, “and there is something so singular in her past life, that her history is not unlike one of the fictions of romance. She has a very large jointure, and her grounds are laid out with a taste and fancy which remind us of the description of fairy land. She has met with one misfortune, which has made so deep an impression on her mind, that, after a lapse of twenty years, its traits are still visible. Her mind, however, is naturally
of

of that amiable turn, so kindly constituted by nature, and so cultivated by the habits of a superior education, that though misfortune may soften, it cannot sour her. I was the companion and schoolfellow of her early years ; I have been a witness, therefore, of the greater part of the events, which, if it will contribute to your amusement," (addressing herself to me and another lady of our party), " I will relate."

We entreated her to proceed, as the lady, the subject of her narrative, is a character as well known as generally respected through the county.—" No," replied she, " I will not relate it at present: we will order our coach for the visit, and you shall hear it on your way. You will relish the story better when you are on the road to see its heroine."

The carriage was accordingly ordered ; and as the distance was about seven miles, we hastened to our seats. We were no sooner without the gates of the grounds in which the house of our friend is seated, than I requested the performance of her promise. She thus began.

HISTORY OF BELISE.

“ The name of this lady is Belisé, a French name, and derived from a lady of quality on the Continent who stood her godmother. Her father was a gentleman of this neighbourhood, a man of birth and ample estate. She was an only child, and this was the first misfortune of her life. Her parents, with a blind fondness too usual

usual with such children, indulged her from earliest infancy in every wish, and thus encouraged in her that sickly delicacy of mind which was of so fatal consequence to her future happiness. Her next misfortune was the loss of her mother, when she had scarcely attained her twelfth year. Belisé upon this event left school, whence she was called to the consolation of her father; and his affection would not suffer her to return. A governess was taken into the house, and every master of eminence in every elegant accomplishment engaged to attend her. With advantages like these, the most inferior talents might have become respectable; but the quick mind, the lively imagination of Belisé, her ready wit, and prompt conception turned these opportunities to the best account.

“ Thus highly cultivated, she became

at sixteen possessed of all those accomplishments which, if void of intrinsic value, are yet admirable, when not made to stand in place of more solid virtues, and which bestow a grace and splendour, if not an utility upon life. To all these attainments of education she added the gifts of Nature ;—she was tall in person, of a complexion which shewed life and spirits, an oval face shaded with hair of a dark auburn, a fairy shape and lightness, and an eye whose darting lustre was tempered with feminine softness : in short, at sixteen she was the toast of the country.

“In the neighbourhood of Belisé, and within a few miles of her house, lived two gentlemen, who, by the death of their fathers, had obtained an early possession of their estates. These were the chief candidates for her favour. Her father had referred them to Belisé herself,

herself, informing them that the education he had given his daughter enabled her to chuse for herself, and that wherever that choice might fall, it should be confirmed by his consent. With this so candid answer, the gentlemen began their addresses, and exerted themselves to gain her good opinion. Belisé had some difficulty to decide between her lovers. If Lyfander had the better wit, Acasto had the better person ; if Lyfander had more of the manly character, Acasto had more of that suppleness which enabled him to assume the tone of every one with whom he conversed. In the wit of Lyfander there was an acuteness which inspired something of dread ; Acasto was gay and trifling, easy to his own faults, and indifferent to those of others :—Acasto, in short, was the more agreeable lover, but Lyfander seemed best suited for the husband. As Belisé and myself have walked up these lanes through

which we are now driving, we would often dispute on the different qualities of the two lovers. One day, however, a circumstance happened which determined her choice. As it marks the singularity of her character, and has something strange in itself, I will relate it.

“ One morning as we were walking before the house, and conversing as usual on their separate merits, the caprice took me to speak in favour of Acasto, in order to judge how the heart of my friend was disposed.

‘ Well, for my part,’ I exclaimed, ‘ were I to determine, Belifé, my choice should fall upon Acasto.’

‘ But he is so great a coxcomb,’ she replied.

‘ That is, my dear,’ returned I, ‘ he has so much of that gaiety and good humour
which

which please the generality of our sex, and is so unusual among men ; and if the greater part abuse it, it is that they want talents to reach it. It is a customary kind of policy to affect to despise what they have not the power to attain. It is an artifice that saves our credit, and converts our incapacity to acquire a quality, into the seeming virtue of despising it. Shew me any man,' I continued, ' with the gifts of a coxcomb, who has not become a coxcomb. Moreover, if we may believe the moralists, those marriages are generally the most happy where the parties are most alike—where there is most harmony of temper and most similitude of pursuit. Now let me ask you, my dear, what can more resemble a woman than a coxcomb ?'

“ Belisé laughed, and added that I had
pleaded

pleaded the cause well.—‘ And here,’ she cried, ‘ comes your client—demand your fee.’

“ We were now joined by Acasto, who, dismounting, and leading his horse, begged we might continue our conversation, and enquired into the nature of it.

‘ Certainly,’ replied Belifé: ‘ we have fallen into an argument upon which of two qualities a rational preference should be grounded—wit and good-humour are the subjects. This lady has taken the part of good-humour, and I have been defending wit. Pray what is your opinion, Sir?’

‘ Why, with your pardon, Madam, I must pass over to this side of the house; this lady’s preference, I confess, is mine. The value of any quality must be rated
according

according to its utility in life—in other words, according to its effect in promoting our happiness. Now, who will deny that good-humour does more promote this end than all the wit in the world? The happiness of domestic life, the pleasures of society and conversation, depend entirely upon this quality; and there are thousands who, with very moderate pretensions to intellectual distinctions, diffuse joy and life around them by the mere possession of this homely gift. But here comes Lyfander to give his sentiments.’

“ Lyfander having joined us, was informed by his rival of the nature of our conversation; and I thought, upon mentioning the dispute between wit and good-humour, he appeared as if he understood the meaning of the argument, which had escaped his more shallow

shallow rival. He seemed to perceive that his mistress was comparing her two lovers, and endeavouring to weigh, by their own assistance, their different qualities.

‘ I confess,’ said he, in giving his opinion, ‘ my preference is for what you are pleased to call *wit*, but which, with your permission, I will change into understanding. And you must give me leave to remark an error. In setting wit on one side, and good-humour on the other, you seem to have adopted as a principle that there is a kind of natural incongruity between them, and that they cannot be mixed together in the same person. A very common error ; but there is no such natural distinction. There are many who have been equally known for good understanding, and, to use a vulgar expression, for good tempers. There

is

is a difference, indeed, between the insipid good-nature—a blind instinct of a fool, and that higher kind which marks the man of understanding. A man of good-nature will, indeed, relieve any distress which is immediately presented to his eyes, but he will relieve it in a common way. A man of understanding will sometimes step out of his way, and will do things of which the other would have never thought.’

“Lyfander had scarcely finished, when a poor woman, apparently the wife of a soldier, came up to us, and asked alms. She had a fine child with her, but both mother and child, though it was a cold wintry day, were so thinly clad, that they seemed sinking beneath the inclemency of the season. Acasto, with his usual good-nature, gave her some loose silver. She next applied to
Lyfander,

Lyfander, who, to our astonishment, pulling off his great coat, threw it over the woman and her infant, and giving her some money, desired her to hasten to the next town, as he foresaw a fall of snow. The woman took her leave, but had proceeded only a few steps, when excess of fatigue brought her to the ground. Acasto ran and assisted her, and the woman presently continued on her way. Lyfander, as soon as he saw her fall, without seeming to go to her assistance, or telling us his intention, walked to the house of Belisé's father, which was not far distant from the road where we were walking. We were at a loss to know what he intended, when in less than a quarter of an hour we saw him return in his phaeton; and bowing as he passed, and telling Belisé that he dined with her father, he proceeded onwards, and soon reached the woman and child. He
instantly

instantly took them up, and having no servant with him, drove off himself. Acasto and myself laughed, but Belis  appeared serious, and in a short time pensive.

“ In truth, it was this singular and half-ludicrous circumstance that determined her choice. Her mind, which had all the warm enthusiasm of romance, was sensibly struck by a singularity like this ; and her heart was, from this day, decided in favour of Lyfander. He soon perceived her preference, and pursued her by his importunities into an acknowledgment of his being an accepted lover. As his family and fortune were unexceptionable, the choice of the daughter was confirmed by the consent of the father : in short, the day was soon fixed which was to give him Belis  for ever. In the meantime, the success of his rival was soon visible to Acasto, and he saw it with an
indifference

indifference which even astonished those that best knew the easiness of his temper.

“As Belisé and myself were one day walking, Acasto perceived us from a distance, and instantly rode up.—‘I am come,’ said he, taking Belisé’s hand, ‘with a dire intent.’

‘How so?’ said Belisé.

‘Why to put you to the rack, Madam. In short, I have now a business of some importance.’

“At this I was preparing to leave them. He stopped me.

‘Nay, Madam, it may concern you too,’ said he.

“I waited to hear him.

‘Pray

‘ Pray may I ask your sentiments,’ he continued, ‘ on the conduct of those ladies who gratify their vanity at the expence of their lovers’ peace—who, while positively engaged to one man, give a tacit encouragement to a hundred others, whose too favourable opinion may have put them in the way of being so fooled?’

“ I saw Belifé bite her lips at this remark, which was evidently levelled at herself. She assented, however, to the observation, and with as admirable address as candour, added—‘ I not only agree with you, Sir ; but were I myself in that situation—I mean, had I two lovers, and had determined in favour of one, the other would have but to ask my sentiments, and my acknowledged preference for his rival should put an end to his future hopes.’

‘ Thank

‘ Thank you, Madam,’ said he ; ‘ I acknowledge your principle, and I now claim it. Will you be pleased to answer me a plain question ?’

“ Belisé, well knowing what was coming, blushed; but replied firmly that she was ready to answer him. In short, she acknowledged her preference for Lyfander. Acasto rallied his own ill luck with great good-humour and wit; and Belisé, with an inconsistency but too common among our sex, seemed really disconcerted at the easy indifference with which her rejected lover bore his dismissal.

“ In a few weeks after this, Belisé and Lyfander were married. For some time they realized the expectations that had
been

been formed ; and, as their good qualities deserved, enjoyed the highest portion of domestic felicity. Acasto continued to visit them, and nothing was talked of throughout the country but the long friendship and steady harmony of the rivals—a friendship that held out against their clashing pretensions in the course of so long an address to the same woman. But this astonishment was soon dissipated, this mutual confidence soon destroyed, and all their domestic happiness, in one rash moment, and by one foible, equally in the character of Lyfander and his wife, lost for ever.”

By this time we arrived at the avenue leading to the house, and my companion delayed her sequel till after the visit. I am weary of writing on the same subject ; and
having

having just received an answer from my Lord,
I enclose it for you. I shall take another
opportunity of giving you what remains of
the history of Belisé.

From Lord Varnish to Lady Varnish.

“ MY DEAR LADY V.

“ The bearer of this will bring you the
orders on my banker. As you brought me
a fortune, you shall share it. You know
I always hated that selfish illiberality which
is but too common amongst our Noblemen,
and which leads them to indulge themselves
in every extravagance, whilst they deny
their wives and sons that little sufficiency
which is necessary to their rank. This is
a meanness

a meanness of which I shall never be guilty. Spend as you like, Madam ; I set but little limits to my own expences, and can therefore have no right to prescribe any to your's. In the name of all good, then, no more hesitation, my Lady V., in asking money of me. Let us spend with equal hand ; and should our extravagance oblige us to sell, we will cut a card for the benefit of the last mortgage. The steward has no money you say ! He certainly is a rogue—his hypocrisy is a strong presumption : but you must not dismiss him ; for as the world goes, a rogue may be useful. I wish the fellow had been a lawyer, and then his roguery might have helped us in our present election. I begin to detest this town ; the fools are so honest, that they will not sell themselves ; and though we have a dozen

lawyers employed, the town gets drunk at our expence, and then votes for the opposite party.

“ But now to the chief purport of my letter. Your uncle, Sir Hilary, is left guardian to his niece, your cousin, Miss Rachael. She is a Norfolk heiress, and of the immense fortune of fifty thousand pounds ! Her father brought her up in the true country style, and she is totally ignorant of all the forms of fashionable life. Plague take this letter and my circuitous pen ! But to finish all in one word. Your Ladyship is to break this young savage in ; you must take her to town with you this winter, and lick the young bear into some passable shape. I have promised Sir Hilary. Have the goodness to let him see I have some influence.

influence. She will arrive at Clarebrook to-morrow night.

“ Dear Madam, your Ladyship’s, &c.

“ VARNISH.”

LETTER III.

Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

I LEAVE the country to-morrow or the day following ; you will receive this, and possibly another letter before my arrival in town. I will now proceed to the sequel of the history of Belisé.

Having resumed our seats, my companion

D 2

continued

continued her narrative. I shall still give her relation in her own words.—“ I finished, I think,” said she, “ with telling you of the happiness which Lyfander and Belisé enjoyed in the first season of their union. I mentioned, however, that this happiness was short, and soon interrupted by scenes of misery. I added, that this was caused by one unfortunate weakness, which thus destroyed the effect of a thousand other good qualities in the character of Lyfander.

“ Lyfander, with all that manly firmness and constancy of mind which constitute a marked character, had one foible—that of a warm and impetuous temper. In spite of the curbing restraints of his strong reason, this heat would sometimes break forth ; and if inflamed by the least opposition, rage with a fury that left all decorum far behind—
a cast

a cast of mind very common ; and as to its effects on the happiness of ourselves and others, more truly pernicious than any passion whatsoever. Every other vice is attended by some temptation ; something is gained, or at least proposed to be gained, and the consciousness of criminality is assuaged by the reflection that if something is lost in peace, something is acquired in profit. But the passionate man is vicious only to his own cost ; he works industriously the misery of himself and those around him, and his sacrifice of self-esteem is not compensated by any returning advantages.—This foible of her husband was truly painful to Belisé, as the long indulgence of her parents had formed her mind to a more than common sensibility. She herself, however, was not without a foible, of equal danger to her own and her husband's peace. This was

a kind of haughtiness of mind which, when supported by consciousness of right, disdained to yield, and paid too little regard to the opinions of others. To this was added a lively and unrestrained resentment of any treatment she imagined unjust. In these foibles the source of their subsequent misfortune was found.

“ Acasto, as I have said, continued to visit at their house, and Lyfander admitted him with his usual confidence. In giving the character of Acasto, I have described him rather as a coxcomb, than as having any thing mischievous in his designs. He had a levity, however, which is frequently as dangerous as vice, and not unusually leads into it. His love for Belisé was not diminished either by her marriage or her cruelty ; and though he carefully concealed it from others,

others, and even endeavoured to hide it from himself, the flame yet lived, wanting only opportunity to burst forth, and burn with stronger vigour than ever.

“ The openness of Belifé, and a certain playfulness in her temper, which made her addicted to raillery, and therefore easily pardoning it, unfortunately encouraged these imprudent sentiments in Acasto; and he found himself daily more confirmed in his dishonourable passion. He struggled for some time with his principles, which, though not naturally vicious, were yet too weak to maintain the contest; and in a kind of despair of his own virtue, he surrendered himself up to the sweet delusion.

“ Lyfander, though not addicted to jealousy, was yet a little displeased with some

symptoms he perceived in his friend. His suspicions did not rest here, but were soon increased by a trifling incident.

“ Belisé was fond of plays, and this humour would often lead her to declaim and act a favourite part with Acasto. It happened one day that Acasto, according to some passage he was performing, had thrown himself on his knees before Belisé, when the door on a sudden opened, and her husband entered. Acasto in great confusion endeavoured to rise; and as the situation had some awkwardness, Belisé blushed as she explained it. Lyfander said not a word, but left the room. Belisé was irritated by this unjust suspicion; and in subservience to that fatal foible, that pride of mind I have mentioned before, disdained submitting
to.

to explain, where she was conscious there was nothing to defend.

“ Lyfander, as is customary with men of his passionate cast, construed this haughtiness of his wife into disgust of himself, and disdained with equal pride to seek that conviction which was not voluntarily offered. Thus was their mutual happiness sacrificed to a false pride and a mistaken delicacy : each considered it a point of honour not to be the first in submission.

“ Acasto still continued his visits, and both husband and wife, from the same stubborn principle, still continued to receive them as before. From this time, however, a coolness arose between the couple, and terminated shortly in that sure forerunner of wedded misery—separate tables and beds.

The maid, who was immediately attendant on the person of Belisé, was a French girl, and had all that spirit and zest of intrigue which distinguishes that kind of creatures. She soon penetrated into the love of Acasto, and the groundless jealousy of her master; and when she had made the discovery, she determined to turn it to account. For this purpose she would contrive to meet Acasto, and beginning an artful conversation with him, endeavoured to make him believe that the indifference of Belisé was but pretended, and that she was more favourable to him than he imagined: moreover, that the change in her husband's conduct towards her had worked some change in his favour. The girl, however, with an admirable artifice, had taken care not to ruin her part by overacting it; and in what she reported as having seen, or heard from her mistress, had

had said nothing which could appear too contradictory to the known modesty of her Lady. This gave her words a degree of credit, which the common sense of Acasto would otherwise have refused them; and his ardent love rendered the deception the more easy, as it was thus made the more pleasing. In short, he suffered the girl to persuade him to write to his mistress, and she herself undertook to deliver the letter.

“ Having written a billet, he put it into the hands of this confidante, and accompanying it with a purse, entreated her to execute the commission with care and secrecy. The girl promised every thing, and departed. She had scarcely left him, when he remembered, in his perturbation, that he had forgotten to seal his letter. This, however, gave him little concern at

the time ; but you will soon see that this trifling circumstance was of more serious consequence than the letter itself—it confirmed a suspicion into a belief.

“ The girl had no sooner departed with the letter, and undertaken to deliver it, than she began considering with herself how she could best execute her trust. Something was necessary to be done ; she had received one large bribe already, and expected to receive many more. She was too well persuaded of the virtue of her mistress to attempt at once delivering it into her hands ; not but that she entertained hopes that the love and merit of Acasto might at length soften this rigid virtue, and render her services, at some future time, as acceptable to Belise herself as they were now to her lover.

Being

Being wrapped in these thoughts, she had entered the house, and passed on to her mistress's room. An open drawer on her Lady's dressing table happened to catch her eye; at that moment she heard a step, and in mere despair of any other expedient, she threw the letter into the drawer, where it could not fail to meet the attention of her Lady. She had not, however, the confidence to wait the effect of her scheme, but hurried out of the room. At the same moment her mistress entered; she was preparing for a morning visit, and happened to go to another table, and in the hurry of preparation, and her carriage waiting, she did not discover the billet.

“Lyfander happened at this time to be writing some letters in the next chamber, when, wanting a seal, and not having his
own

own at hand, he stepped into Belisé's room to seek her's. Going up to the dressing-table, his eye caught the open letter; he seized it with great agitation, and hastily retired to his own room. Here he locked the door, and tore open the letter. Its contents were as follow :—

To Belisé.

“And are you then at last, my Belisé, less insensible to my love? Have I at length touched your heart, and will my passion be rewarded by your pity? Will you add one greater proof? I cannot see you at the house of Lyfander. Need I give any further explanation?”

“Your's,

“ACASTO.”

“Lyfander,

“Lyfander, blinded with jealousy, was now confirmed in his fufpicions. They were ftill more increased by an incident I have mentioned : Acafto had forgotten to feal his letter, and his meffenger had gratified her curiofity by reading it. She was employed, indeed, in this, when, hearing the ftap of her miftrefs, ſhe had thrown it into the open drawer.

“Lyfander knew that his wife had but that moment left the room, and that no one but himſelf had ſince entered it. This unhappy concurrence of circumftances put the matter beyond doubt. His wife, therefore, had ſeen the letter—the letter itſelf acknowledged ſome prior favour, and with a confidence that could only ariſe from the moſt liberal encouragement, requested an appointment. Lyfander was convinced..

“ At this instant a sudden thought struck him. He remembered that his wife was gone to pay a visit ; this corresponded, he thought, with the request in the note. He had no room for doubt—his jealousy was blown into a flame. He loaded his pistols, mounted his horse, and took the road to Acasto’s house.

“ In the meantime Belisé was proceeding to pay the visit I have mentioned. It happened by one of those unfortunate accidents, which almost confirm us in the belief of fate, and a certain and necessary destiny, that Belisé was actually on her way to visit the sister of her lover.

“ Belisé was not ignorant of her husband’s jealousy, and her friends had often remonstrated with her, and amongst them myself,
against

against an intimacy with Acasto's sister in the present complexion of affairs. But her unhappy foible, the pride of innocence, made her disdain all appearance of concession, and rather increased the frequency of her visits to this lady. She defied all censure, from an assurance of its groundlessness; and being supported by a conscious innocence, would stoop to no submission. She was now, therefore, in the very house of Acasto, and her carriage remaining at the door.

“ Lyfander, who had pushed his horse to its full, goaded on by jealousy and revenge, arrived at the avenue leading to the house the moment Belisé, in her carriage, stopped at the gate. He saw Acasto come to the door, take her hand, and conduct her within. This was enough. He perceived
a lad

a lad at a distance, whom he beckoned to him, and dispatched with a message to Acasto. It was—‘ That a strange gentleman desired to see him on business of importance.’

“ Acasto, surprised at this singular message, came, directed by the boy, to the entrance of the avenue. Lyfander, in the fury of his passion, immediately collared him, and presenting a pistol in one hand, held in the other the fatal billet. He then retreated a few paces, and levelling his pistol, fired it, desiring Acasto to do the same. The shot wounded his rival, who, irritated by pain, discharged his own pistol. The ball entered the heart of Lyfander, who fell dead upon the spot !

“ In the meantime, the affrighted lad who had conducted Acasto, seeing the violence of
the

the gentlemen, had fled to the house, and spread the alarm. The sister of Acasto, hearing that the stranger, for the lad knew not Lyfander by any other name, had presented a pistol at her brother, hurried to the place in great terror, followed by Belisé, who was yet ignorant of the dreadful event. They arrived at the moment Lyfander fell, and Belisé in that moment recognised her husband, and sprang forward instinctively. Belisé, too confounded as yet to comprehend the extent of her misfortune, attempted to raise him up, but found that he was dead ! She gave a shriek of madness and horror, and fell senseless beside him !

“ Endeavour now to present to your mind the horrid scene ! The sister of Acasto, stanching the blood which flowed from her brother’s wound—Lyfander dead, and
his

his wife, to all appearance so, beside him—the pistols lying in the road, and a whole parish, for the people were fast collecting, furrounding the spot !

“ I will here conclude my history, since I perceive what pain I have given you by the horrid recital. I will only add that Belisè remained for some years in a state of perfect insensibility, almost approaching to idiotism. Her senses, however, were at length providentially restored ; but as they brought her to the full perception of her misfortune, I have sometimes thought the loss of them would have been more tolerable. She still retains her grief, and will often wholly seclude herself from society, and spend the day in tears. Her religion, I believe, and the warm confidence she derives from it, is what has preserved her from incurable madness.

madness. Acasto likewise felt sensibly his misfortune in having murdered his friend by his own hand ; and, to dissipate his grief, and give time for the story to die away, he fled to the Continent. He is now a sincere penitent, and has lately returned ; but his former gay spirits are lost, and he sometimes experiences the distraction of a mind wholly possessed by melancholy.”

Well, my dear, here is the end of poor Belisé's history. What think you of it ? After having written so long a tale, I will not write a comment on it as tedious as the tale itself. The text must not be overburthened with notes, to make obscure what is already plain ; yet this one thing I will add, that to refuse an explanation in dubious circumstances, is at least to deserve
a sus-

a suspicion, if not an accusation of guilt ; and that those who are careless, whether they are thought innocent or not, are for the most part (though I allow some few exceptions) in the high road of being what they are only suspected.

Heavens, Frail, what a sentiment ! It is as tedious as those Scripture paraphrases which we meet in sentimental comedies. But I am heartily tired ; so good-night, my dear !”

Your's affectionately,

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

MY DEAR FRAIL,

THIS is the last letter you will receive from me from Clarebrock, as I depart for London to-morrow. Yes, my dear, the period of my banishment is now arrived ; I am about to return to the light, life, and liberty of the dear town. There is nothing more intolerable than what is called retirement.

I am

I am interrupted by a coach driving up to my gate—the liveries are Sir Hilary's; it is his niece; therefore the young savage, as my Lord is pleased to call her. I must descend to receive her. I will not close this letter till I have seen her, and told you what I think of her. But adieu for the present !

* * * * *

It is now twelve o'clock. I have just dismissed my young charge to her chamber, and I assure you very unwillingly, for I am quite charmed with her. She is a tall, well-shaped girl, auburn hair, a fair, open forehead, eyes vivid, sparkling, and full of meaning. Her temper is gay and candid, and she carries such an air of happiness, good-humour, and simplicity in her face, that it is impossible to see her without a great degree of interest. I really love the
girl

girl already. We have not been acquainted two hours, and are become as familiar as two school-girls.

I was amused during supper by her youthful eagerness ; her mind is all hope, and the rapture of the novel scene she is about to enter, illumines her eyes with a new life. I am as pleased to answer questions as she to ask them : my readiness and attention delight her ; and with all the affectionate simplicity of youth, which ever feels before it acts, and repays kindness with liberal interest, she is already as much attached to me as though we had been companions from childhood. How flattering is fondness to a heart that is not insensible ! I repeat it again, Frail, in the midst of all my carelessness I am conscious I have such a heart : it wants but an object to awake it

into feeling. It has once loved, and Oh with what excess of tenderness ! It was betrayed and deserted by its dearest object ; it still preserves it in remembrance, and loses all anger for the desertion in regret for the loss. Yes, my dear, I still love Hilario—still retain the fond hope that he may not be lost to me for ever. I have promised you my strange history, and you shall have it on my arrival in town.

Good-night, my dear ! I was going to conclude, when my eye caught a letter that lay on my dressing-table, and which my young *élève* brought me from her uncle. I have enclosed it for you : it will display a new character—that of a rough, but manly country gentleman. He has a good estate, but his worth has given him a greater influence than his rents ; and he can almost
command

command a county by the love and respect his integrity has procured him. But read his letter.

Sir Hilary H. to Lady Varnish.

“ MADAM,

“ I have sent my niece according to your Ladyship’s invitation, and she brings this letter in her hand. With your pardon, Madam, I will take the liberty of addressing a few lines to your attention.

“ This young girl was the only daughter of my late brother, and is therefore my niece; and in the country, my Lady, we love our brothers and our nieces. I love her as my own child; and to do her but justice, the girl is a good girl, Madam, and

well deserves it. I commit her, therefore, to your Ladyship's protection as I would commit my own daughter; and you will excuse my earnestness when I recommend her in the same manner.

“ A few weeks ago a carriage was overturned by my park, and a young lady and her father came to my hall for protection. I should have told you that the accident was in the night, and that the weather was rainy and tempestuous. It is my rule, Madam, and a rule I learned from my old fathers before me, never to dismiss a stranger from my gate without first persuading him to enter it, and then, shutting it behind him, endeavour to keep him as long as I can.

“ These strangers were from London; and
the

the young lady, being of the same age with my niece, slept in the same bed with her, and remained at my house some days. Immediately after her departure, I observed a change in the disposition of my niece, who, from being the gayest girl in the whole county, was now become the dullest. To make short of the matter, Madam, I soon perceived the cause of this change. Her late companion and bedfellow had amused her, during her stay, with gay descriptions of London, the fashions, the Court, the Operas, &c. &c.; and nothing would now please her but to go to London to be *polished*, she said (repeating, I suppose, after her new friend), and learn the manners of what she called the *beau-monde*.

“ I tried to dissuade her from it, but her melancholy and listlessness would then return.

In short, my Lady, as I love my girl, and she is my brother's own daughter, and as I never refused her any thing in my life, I could not withhold my consent. You have received her to indulge her wishes, and have undertaken to teach her the polite world.

“ It is on this subject, Madam, I have something serious to add. Be pleased to remember, my Lady, what you have now received from me, and return me at the end of the winter what you have thus received from me in the beginning. I have sent you a plain-thinking, a plain-spoken, a plain-dressing, honest country girl—one who always speaks as she thinks, and one that thinks as a homely wit and sober reason taught her grandmother to think before her. She loves her relations, respects her Clergyman, and attends her Church. She
speaks.

speaks humbly, acts meekly, and considers an inferior as a fellow-creature.

“Not to take up your time with a long letter, I will tell your Ladyship in a few more words what she is. She is a honest, a comely, a good-humoured, and good-principled country girl. She has a lover as honest as herself. They have pledged themselves to each other, and it is my intention to have them married on her return from your Ladyship’s protection.

“Such, Madam, is the girl you will receive from my hands, and such I shall demand from your charge when the time of her visit is expired. Introduce her as you please into the gay world; I give you leave to add what improvements you chuse: I only stipulate that she should not be polished out

of her natural good manners, or refined out of her natural integrity. I again repeat, return me my girl!—return me the same honesty, the same simplicity, and the same innocence I have sent you.

“ Your Ladyship, I trust, will excuse my freedom: I love my girl, and feel too anxiously to flatter. I again enjoin you, Madam, to return me my COUNTRY GIRL.

“ Madam,

“ Your Ladyship’s kinsman

“ And humble servant,

“ HILARY H.”

There, my dear, what think you of this country gentleman?—or rather, from the description he has given of the manners, morals,

morals, and education of my young charge, what opinion have you formed of her? Yet be assured she is not the Hottentot here described: she has sense, and that of the better sort; a vivacity, a gaiety of manner, and a mind rich enough for the seeds of fashion to take good root in. Country breeding, though it has confined her experience, has not curtailed her ideas; they range wildly, and form to themselves greater expectations from the introduction about to take place, than even that introduction will realize. I doubt whether Sir Hilary will see the advice in his letter fulfilled. The innocence, the simplicity, and candour he has sent me, will be left behind her in town with her country clothes. We all of us, I fear, polish like metals; what we gain in brightness, we fail not to lose

in substance. Then the poor shepherd to whom the silly girl has pledged herself! He, I think, will not find his chance improved by having his mistress introduced into life! Good luck to him! I cannot help smiling at the idea. It is very late, so once for all adieu!

Your's, &c.

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER V.

London, Saturday Night.

OH MY DEAR COUSIN JENNY,

I AM so pleased, and frightened, and astonished, and confounded, that I neither know what I do, what I say, or what I write. I can only tell you that I am now writing in bed; and I find I shall never be able to write at any other time, or in any other manner. Time is one thing in the country, and another in town. I always had too much of it there; but here,

if I had ten times as much more, I could find an use for it all.

We set off from Clarebrook at eleven o'clock this morning, my Lady and myself in the travelling coach, and my maid Jenny and my Lady's maids in another chaise behind us. The road was very dull, but I scarce perceived it; for I was thinking so much of my journey's end, that I had got many miles before I well knew I was in a coach. My Lady cousin was very gay and good-humoured; she sometimes laughed at my questions, but she always answered them; and you may be sure, my dear, I asked her a great many. I remember she particularly laughed at one thing I said to her. I told her I was afraid we should get in town so late, and be so tired by the time we got to bed, that we should oversleep ourselves in
the

the morning, and be too late to dress for Church. Her Ladyship laughed, though, for the life of me, cousin Jenny, I cannot make out for what ; but it must certainly have been at something in my manner of speaking, for as people of fashion are so much better taught than others, they must certainly be better and more serious : they cannot laugh at going to Church, who must have read so many good books, and received so much good instruction.

We arrived at Epping to dinner about five o'clock ; and having made a very hasty meal, again got into our coaches, and drove for London. It was now quite dark, but the road was lighted with lamps : yes, as sure as you are alive, cousin Jenny, there were lamps on each side ; but I suppose this was done out of compliment to

5 my

my Lady. They heard, perhaps, that we were coming up by this road, and chose to pay us this pretty compliment.

I asked my Lady if this was not the case, and she again only laughed. I wish she would get rid of this odious trick, for I sometimes almost imagine that she is laughing at me. It is certainly very rude; and if she puts me in a passion, I shall not mind telling her so.

It was now getting later, and the long journey had made me fall asleep even against my will, when I was awoke by my cousin Lady with a slight jog;—and, Oh cousin Jenny! how can I tell you what I now saw!—We had got into the middle of the streets of London—and such a sight, my dear! Every thing so bright, so gay, so bustling!—

bustling !—the lamps burning, the jewel-shops lighted up, the coaches rattling, and the people thronging ! You may remember, cousin, reading of the City of Bagdad in the Arabian Nights. Read it again, Jenny, for it is an exact description of London.

To-morrow we dine with my Lady Lurewell, and I shall write you an account of our visit. Give my love to Squire Robert, and tell him to remember to write to me next Wednesday ;—I'll then answer him on Saturday, and we'll manage in this manner whilst I stay in town. Tell him, as I am not down in the country, I can see no business he will have at the next Christmas assemblies, and that I would much rather he would stay away ; but if he must go, tell him I insist upon his not dancing with Miss G——. I'll never write or
sec

see him again if he does ; and he may go about his business for a base and unfaithful man. Bid him, in short, be as true to me as if I were always before his eyes, and remember our broken fixpence and exchange of hair. Absence should make no difference in a true lover.—Good night. It is now so late that I must go to sleep.

Your's, dear cousin,

RACHAEL H——.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

London, Saturday, Nov. 28.

DEAR JENNY,

OUR visit is paid, and I am writing you an account of it in bed. I have already told you that this is the only time I have to spare. But I have a great deal to tell you, and so must make haste to begin.

As I am in a strange house, I begged that my maid Jenny might sleep in the closet of my bedroom, and my Lady ordered
that

that it should be so. When I awoke this morning, and thought by the light it was near ten o'clock, our country Church hours, I called up Jenny in a great hurry, and we both dressed ourselves immediately so as to be ready for Church. We went down stairs, and meeting a servant, I asked him if we were time enough. The fellow stared, but asked Jenny—"Time enough for what?"

Jenny told him that we wanted to know if we were time enough for Church, and if my Lady was yet gone. The saucy rascal burst out into a laugh. Dear cousin Jenny, what can they all mean by this laughing? I have as good a face as my Lady herself; I neither squint, nor have a crooked nose! What is it, then, that they all see to laugh at?—Well, I told you that the fellow laughed.

At

At this moment the street-door being opened by the porter, Jenny heard the last bell of a neighbouring chapel ; and taking hold of my arm—"Come, Miss," cried the girl, "we shall be too late else—my Lady must have gone!"—And so saying, she pulled me out of the door, and we walked up the street as fast as we could, for fear of being too late. I happened, however, to turn my eyes back, when I saw all my aunt's servants, and a crowd of others that had joined them, collected round the door, and staring at us with the strongest astonishment. Dear cousin, what can all this mean ?

To Church, however, we went, heard a sermon, and returned home about one. The porter, as I thought, seemed to grin as he let us in. My Lady's maid came to tell

tell me that her Ladyship waited breakfast. I accordingly went up, and my Lady received me very kindly. Observing my bonnet on, she asked me in some astonishment where I had been. I told her to Church.—“To Church!” cried she, and dropped her tea-cup!

The Lady's maid, who was in waiting, fell a giggling, till my Lady checked her. She then told me that people of fashion never went to Church, and that I must stay away, or be laughed at—that these things were only for the lower order of the people.

Tell me, cousin, what I must do; I cannot endure to be laughed at. And surely these people of fashion must know what is right. Well, it must be so; I must not for the future venture to Church.

At

At four o'clock we drove to Lady Lurewell's to dinner. There was a very large party both of gentlemen and ladies. I was at first a little uneasy about this Church affair : I wanted to be a woman of fashion, and yet I was unwilling to give up Church. But I heard a conversation at this table that has made me happy again, and set me free from all fears on this subject. Colonel Brilliant, a gentleman whom they here call a wit, had an argument with my Lady Flash on religion. The Colonel said an infinite number of very sprightly things, and the lady was equally entertaining to the company. They at first said such things as made my very hair stand at an end ; but when I saw the whole company take it so merrily, I thought within myself that it could not be so bad as it appeared to me. There were a great many grave and some old

old gentlemen at table ; but they laughed as well as the others at the Colonel's jests. But what had more weight with me than any thing else, there was a Clergyman at table, a very well-bred man, and, as I hear, a man of fashion. I expected he would have attacked the Colonel ; but, instead of that, he smiled as if he were pleased, and even said some light things that made the company laugh, and the Colonel shook him by the hand, and called him a very honest fellow. Now the Clergyman would not have been silent if the Colonel had not been *right* !

But I am now going to mention a thing which will at first frighten you. I saw some tables set, which at first I could scarcely understand, but they had every appearance of card-tables : yet I could
scarcely

scarcely believe that people of fashion would play at cards on a Sunday till I saw all the company rise, and advance to the tables.

My Lady cousin desired me to cut in, but I was really frightened ; and pretending to have a bad head-ache, excused myself, and went and sat myself down on a sofa. Here I was soon joined by the polite Clergyman, who had excused himself from playing as well as myself, and this more fully persuaded me that I had been right in my refusal to join them. I determined, however, to know his opinion, and therefore, to draw him into a conversation, said—

“ I wondered they could play at cards.”

“ I wonder at it too, Madam,” said he.

“ It is so wicked !” said I.

“ Madam !” repeated he, and with almost

as

as rude a stare as the servants had given me in the morning.

“Why pray, Sir,” said I, “do you think it no harm to play at cards on a Sunday?”

“Harm, Madam!” replied he; “about as much harm, Madam, as there is in my taking snuff. I take snuff to amuse myself, and this good company play at cards for the same purpose.—Here, Colonel,” cried he to the Colonel, who was advancing to us, “here is a young lady has a question to put to you. Is it allowable to play at cards on a Sunday?”

“A council, a council!” cried the Colonel; and immediately a number of young people, who had not played, collected around him, and asked him what he meant. He assumed a tone of the most ludicrous gravity, explained

explained the question, and insisted on a fair agitation. ‘The Doctor here,’ says he, ‘shall take the chair as president.’

In short they argued the point ; and the debate being finished just as the tables rose, and other parties were called to cut in, the Colonel called on the Clergyman, as he had now heard the whole matter, to give his determination.

“Well,” replied he, taking my hand, and leading me to a card-table, “I determine it in this manner : this young lady shall take a hand with me.”

When I returned home, my Lady cousin was pleased to tell me that my conduct that evening gave her great satisfaction,

and promised a quick progress in fashionable attainments.—“ You have now, my dear,” said she, “ overcome two country prejudices ; you can take your seat at a card-table, and act up to the mode, in a polite disregard to what they are pleased to call the Sabbath. Go on in this way, my dear, and I shall not blush in a month’s time to present you at Court.”

Hey !—here’s some one at my chamber door !——’Tis Jenny : she begs me to enclose a letter of her’s in my frank to you. ’Tis to one of her fellow-servants, and I think I must humour her. She’ll not seal it she says, for she’s sure you’ll like to read it.—Good night, cousin !

Letter

The enclosed Letter.

Sunday Night.

“ DEAR FANNY JENKINS,

“ I promised you and all my fellow-servants that I would write to you something about this place. Oh Fanny! it is one of the wickedest places in the world; but the people are all so gay in their wickedness, that it is impossible to hate them. They laugh at every thing serious; but then they laugh in such a manner, that you cannot help laughing with them. Here is one gentleman in our family—(I call him a gentleman, though he is only a servant, for all servants are here gentlemen)—but this person, I say, made

us all merry last night ; and can you guess, Fanny, what about ? Why, as sure as you are alive, by jesting upon Parsons ! Oh, they are a sad, wicked people !

“ But I shall now frighten you. Would you believe, Fanny, after we servants had finished our tea, the housekeeper sent her compliments to us, and would be glad of our company to make up a party at cards ! I would not play for a good while, though they did nothing but laugh and sneer at me for my country simplicity. But when they told me their mistresses and masters did the same, I would not believe them. They persuaded me, however, at last ; and as my betters played, I thought it would be vanity in me to refuse : so I took my seat, and I believe they let me win to encourage me.

“ You'll

“ You’ll tell Mr. Roger, the young coachman, to write to me every Wednesday, as Squire Robert, his young master, does to our Miss Rachael ; and tell him to mind what he is about, and be true to me. My Lady’s late footman, the gay young man I have mentioned before, would have kissed me last night ; but tell Mr. Roger I would not let him. Miss has been kind enough to put this letter into her’s, and Miss Jenny will give it you. Give my duty to all at home, and believe me

“ Your’s, &c.

“ JENNY.”

LETTER VII.

From Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

St. James's Square.

DEAR FRAIL,

I HAVE not written to you for some time; and what is still worse, I have a letter of your's now laying by me, which I received three days ago, and have not found time to answer it yet. I shall not, however, trouble you with an excuse, and make a light offence still more intolerable by tedious apologies.

apologies. I remember a celebrated saying of a man of wit and fashion of the present day. Some one had been guilty of one of these slight offences, and was oppressing him with some of these tedious excuses, when he stopped him by a gentle tap on the shoulder.—“My good friend, I have pardoned your offence, but I shall give you a challenge for your apologies.”

You will do me the justice to believe that I have not intentionally neglected you. I have always detested that peevishness of friendship, which only resembles the first love of a young girl—is always making its parties uneasy by its foolish jealousies, always taking affronts, and always requiring apologies. We have known each other too long, and are too well acquainted with each other's temper and disposition to indulge

such petty suspicions. Educated from our childhood at the same school, partners of the same bed in our early years, and of the same societies in our maturer life, we love each other from a kind of habit—a power I can assure you much stronger than that of any passion whatever. Let this long friendship, therefore, give us a mutual confidence; let us not trouble each other with childish reproaches of neglect and indifference, because a spleen or an interrupting visitor happens to delay a promised letter beyond its stated time.

You ask me how I succeed with my young *élève*, the Savage, as you and my Lord are pleased to call her. As for my Lord, I suspect his sincerity. The girl is really very handsome, and, to answer your enquiries as to my success, very docile and tractable.

tractable. I have every hope that a winter under my tuition will make her a complete woman of fashion. I assure you her progress already is by no means contemptible : she has not been in town a fortnight, and she games on Sundays, and has dropped her prayers. We must not be in too great a hurry. The first step towards a fashionable religion is indifference ; and this step once gained, the next, that of ridiculing all religion, soon follows of course.

You may wonder, perhaps, why I should begin with rooting out this prejudice. My answer is, that I was afraid this unfashionable attachment to religion might prove the greatest obstacle to her ready reception of my fashionable precepts. How many of our elegant levities would she have beheld with terror if this country prejudice had not

been previously eradicated ! I should have had her blush at a falsehood, and call fashionable liberties by their harsh country names. Flattery would be meanness, and insincerity of profession a downright lie.

Confess, then, that I have acted the Machiavel in my art, and begun with the necessary foundation. I have cleared away all former rubbish, brushed away every opposing prejudice, and may now build whatever structure I please. Yes, my dear, I repeat it again, this one obstacle removed, my business is now done, and I may leave my pupil to herself. This, however, I shall not do. I will finish my work, and you shall behold her, by the end of this winter, the completest modern woman of fashion. She is now in the road, and will soon reach the goal.

But

But now to perform what I have long promised, and you have at length demanded. I shall give you, therefore, my full history, and in the course of it confess what one woman but very seldom confesses to another : so now prepare to hear what I believe will not astonish you a little.———

My father was a Clergyman, the Reverend Dr. Lyttleton, a gentleman of good preferment, and, I need not add, of a most respectable family. He lived on his Rectory of A——, in the county of Norfolk, and supported a style of elegance which few private gentlemen could imitate. My mother was of a good family : she died very early in life, and before I had well attained my fourteenth year. I was their only child, and the favour of an aunt had

already bequeathed me a fortune of ten thousand pounds. Such was my situation on the death of my mother.

As my father found himself in a state of solitude by this untimely death of his wife, and as his real regard for her (for he was no man of fashion) rendered such a state peculiarly irksome, he determined to take me from my school, and place me at the head of his house and table. I had been in this situation but a few days, when my father received a letter from an old friend of his, condoling with him on his recent loss. At the end of this letter was this passage :—" But I have now a proposal to make, which I flatter myself will be equally agreeable to both of us. My only son is going abroad in about six months,

but

but I could wish him to be better prepared for his tour. Need I add any more ?”

As soon as my father read this passage, he determined to comply with the request it implied, and the more readily so, as the young gentleman was our near relation. An invitation was accordingly sent, accepted, and a day fixed for his arrival.

He arrived on this day, and was received by my father with pleasure ; and, to confess the truth, as a gay, open youth, he was no less pleasing to me. There is a certain age, let prudes deny it as they will, when it is impossible for us to see any of the opposite sex without some interest. Nature will prevail, the kindling wish will rise, the heart will beat and confess its feelings, and even Modesty itself may blush

at

at the images it will find in the bosom of its own votaries. I confess, for my part, I did not see Hilario, for so I shall call him, with indifference. He was of my own age, and in my own rank of life; our families were connected—we were distant relations; and what was, perhaps, strongest of all, were going to live in the same house for the next six months. Strong circumstances all these to the lively fancy of a girl of fifteen, and enough in good conscience to set her a dreaming on future probabilities.

I soon had reason to imagine that I had not been seen with less emotion by Hilario. He took every occasion that offered to entertain me alone; and our conversation beginning in levity, insensibly assumed that tone of sentiment which is the true language
of

of a beginning passion. This seriousness increased with the progress of its cause. At length, as we were one day walking in the garden, with the true spirit of female coquetry I began bantering him on this seriousness, of which I so well knew the source, and insisted on it that it could only arise from some gentle passion. He allowed that it did. I asked him to make me his confidante. He said he would; and then began describing his passion in the most glowing colours, not, however, adding the name of its object. I told him, therefore, his confidence was not perfect, and demanded the name of his mistress, though I could scarcely conceal the emotion he had raised. He told me to command him to name her, and he would obey me. I assumed a tone of levity, and obeyed. He immediately dropped on his knee, and took my hand.—

“ Dear

“ Dear Miss Lyttleton, is it necessary that I should name her ? But I only obey your command, Madam. Yes, Emily, it is yourself : I offer you a heart that never felt but for you ; and if the most ardent love can render it worth acceptance, it is not unworthy of you ! ”

In short, to keep you no longer in suspense, I accepted his love, but desired him to make it known to my father. He promised he would do so, but requested my permission to delay it a few days, that he might fix on the most unexceptionable manner to make such an avowal. I gave him my consent, and we separated.

I fear you may think me too minute, but it is difficult to avoid minuteness upon a subject of this nature :—there is always a
lively

lively pleasure in retracing the scenes of early life ; and how is this pleasure increased, when the scenes thus retraced were those of love and happiness ! Oh Frail ! there was a time, and our memory may easily recal it, when both you and myself could feel, when our hearts beat as Nature bade them, and even prudence could scarce repress the rising sigh as we took a hasty leave of our favoured schoolboys. But this is now over, and we are women of fashion.

But to return to my story.——Pshaw!—
an interruption—some intruding visitor ! I
must break off. Farewell !

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

Lady Varnish in Continuation.

DEAR FRAIL,

WELL, my dear, what flutterer do you think Fortune has sent me in the visitor I mentioned? Why, one as like herself as possible, as volatile, capricious, and inconstant—in short, only differing in gender; for as she is the greatest coquette, so is he the completest coxcomb in the world. After this portrait in miniature, I scarcely need subscribe his name; but to prevent mistakes, it was the man himself—yes, that incorrigible Sir Harry Loveday! The
wretch

wretch has just left me, but has promised to dine with me to-morrow. But now to conclude my story.———

Hilario retired that evening to his chamber, and wrote a letter to his father, which he intended to send the next morning. I rose rather early, as was my usual custom; and as it was summer, and a lovely morning, walked into the garden. I had not been there long, before I saw Hilario advancing towards me with a letter in his hand, and in a slow step. I dreaded something, and took the offered letter from his hand. These were its contents:—

“ DEAR SON,

“ I told you some months ago that, as my age was great, and my life more uncertain,

uncertain every day, I had only the one wish of seeing you married. I have provided you with an alliance in the family of the Earl of Clermont, whose daughter, with an ample fortune, waits your acceptance. I have written to Dr. Lyttleton, and expect you will set off for this place the day after you receive this.

“ Your affectionate father.”

Such were the contents of this dreaded letter ; but I had scarcely time to express my sentiments, before we saw my father approaching towards us. He held in his hand the letter he had just received, paid the young man a few compliments, and then pulling out a large packet, desired me to follow him to his study. I followed him trembling.

trembling, and in some consternation at what business he could possibly have with me.

When we entered the study, he desired me to sit down, and attend to what he said. He then addressed me.

“ You know, my dear, that your aunt has left you a fortune of ten thousand pounds ; but I believe you are unacquainted with a stipulation annexed to that bequest. Do not interrupt me !” (seeing me about to speak.) “ This condition is, that you marry your cousin, and her nephew, my Lord Varnish. My Lord has now returned from abroad, and will be here in a few days to complete this engagement. I forgot to tell you that he is under an obligation equally with yourself ; your aunt’s property was bequeathed

bequeathed between you, under the condition of this intermarriage. I perceive the suddenness of the affair has rather agitated you : I'll leave you to recover yourself."

7

As he was going out of the room, Hilario entered, and seeing me in tears, and thinking the cause of them might be some discovery my father had made of our correspondence, took my father's hand, and abruptly exclaimed—" You are unjust, Sir ; if there be any fault, it is solely mine."

My father could only stare, and demand his meaning, at the same time looking angrily and alarmed at me. Hilario now perceived his error, but it was too late to repair it. He was under the necessity of entering into a full explanation, which he ended by an avowal of his passion, and his fixed resolution

lution to oppose the designs of his father.

My father heard him with patience, and then, taking hold of his arm, desired him to attend him in the garden. They left the room together, and through the windows of the parlour I soon saw them in the most earnest conversation. My father appeared all steadiness and firmness; my lover was at first passionate, but at length, to my great astonishment, became to all appearance calm and temperate, and as if perfectly resigned to the necessity of our affairs.

This tranquillity of my lover excited my indignation, as I could only find one cause to which I could with any probability assign it. This was, that he had submitted

to

to my father's firmness of rejection, and sacrificed me to this and his own interest. Full of this opinion, I hesitated to obey the summons to dinner; but went down at last, through the fear of irritating my father. My father and lover were both seated; the latter rose on my entrance, but did not venture to raise his eyes.

The dinner passed with little said on any side, except by my father, who endeavoured now and then to break the awkwardness of a total silence. The dessert was set. My lover drank my health. I raised my eyes, met his, and gave him a look of mixed contempt and indignation. He immediately withdrew his eyes, and taking an apple, cut it open, and offered it me. I thought this civility, under such circumstances, a piece of unpardonable insolence, and,

and, to shew my repentment, pushed it away with an abrupt jerk of my hand. The apple fell on the table, and a slip of paper fell out of it on the ground. I immediately put my foot on it, and my father luckily not observing it, contrived to take it up, and retire a few minutes after. I flew to my chamber, and locking my door, tore open my billet. Its contents were as follow :—

“ DEAR EMILY,

“ Your father is positive, and there is nothing to be hoped from mine. There is only one step to be taken, but I want the opportunity to inform you of it. Your father will take care to give us no opportunity to be alone. What then is to be

done? Nothing, except you have that real regard for me, and that confidence which would accompany such a regard, as to grant a request I am going to make. It is this—that you will not go to your bed so early to-night, but keep your maid with you, and sit up in your chamber. I will knock at a convenient time, and you must admit me. 'Tis now you must shew your regard in your confidence. I am going out with your father, and we shall not return till twelve at night; so that I can receive no answer to this letter. Do, for Heaven's sake, admit me when I knock!"

This letter raised that struggle in my mind between the two opposite principles of love and prudence, which a young girl, yet alive to modesty, always feels on such
an

an occasion; and the event was what is usual in such contentions. Love prevailed over a strict decorum, and I determined to admit him as he requested.

Your's, &c.

E. VARNISH.

LETTER IX.

Lady Varnish in Continuation.

DEAR FRAIL,

HOW glowing must have been those original sensations of pleasure which, thus blunted by the revolution of years, yet revive in my mind as I now write! My memory again awakens them to their original

vigour, and I feel as though acting in the scenes I now only describe. In spite of my long habits of fashionable indifference, I still find I am a woman—I still find I have a heart, and I find it by feeling. Dear Frail, would you imagine, what is nevertheless true, that I have written this passage with tears? Yet, laugh at me as you please, I cannot but lament what I now am, when my recalling memory presents me with what I once was. But now to my story.—

I retired to my chamber, my maid following me, about eleven o'clock; and having seated ourselves by the fire, I desired her to read, to pass away the time. Whether by accident, or, as I have since thought, by design, she brought one of those high-coloured Novels, where Profligacy is presented to the young imagination in all her brightest appendages, and where Vice loses
all

all its deformity in the dazzling elegance of its dress. The memory of some past sufferings, which I may ascribe to that corruption of principle which this author produced in my mind, makes me still hear his name with horror. A thousand and ten thousand curses overtake him and his whole class who thus poison the springs of knowledge, and, attacking us in a manner which no virtue can resist, inflame our imagination, and thus make us the instruments of our own corruption !

In short, to delay you no longer by my reflections, the gay profligacy of the author and his characters had their full effect, and contributed perhaps more than any thing else to the subsequent events. I felt that stealing languor which is so dangerous to virtue—I grew warm with those

emotions which are the fever of departing modesty, and the sure forerunner of its dissolution.

At this moment the clock struck twelve, and I thought I heard a tap at the door. My heart beat violently. I listened again. It was repeated. My maid rose, opened the door, and my lover was at the instant at my feet.

I was some time before I could recover myself from my confusion, and the ardour of Hilario continued it still longer.—“I leave you to-morrow, my Emily,” said he, “and I fear I leave you for ever!”

I asked him his meaning.

“My meaning,” repeated he, “is too plain.

plain. Our fathers are both opposed to our union. You well know the firmness of your's: he thinks his honour concerned to break our engagement. You know the steadiness and decision with which he always acts. I shall no sooner have left his house, than he will contrive something that will separate us for ever."

This was too true, and I was well acquainted with this part of my father's character. If he had any fault, it was this obstinacy of maintaining any favourite purpose. In this respect he was the most unyielding of men; and, as his address was equal to his constancy, to undertake a point of whatever difficulty was with him to carry it.

This reflection of my lover had therefore

fore its full effect, though I had the prudence to endeavour to conceal it from him. I assured him of my firmness, and conjured him to place a reliance on my faith.—“There is but one way,” repeated he—“an instant marriage.”

I could only answer by a stare of astonishment. He went to the door, and, to my further amazement, and even a degree of terror, introduced a gentleman in the habit of a Clergyman. Then taking my hand—“It is now, Madam, you must convince me of your firmness. This gentleman, whom you know as well as myself, is a Roman Catholic Priest, and is willing to risk even the severities of the law in uniting us. It is true that this act will want some of the formalities the laws require. It is in this part of it, therefore, that you must

must shew your confidence in my honour, your belief that I shall not be the more ready to become a villain, because the laws happen to present me with an opportunity of becoming one with impunity."

I will not lengthen my story ; you may guess the conclusion of this scene. My lover prevailed, the ceremony was performed, and the maid and the Priest left the room.

My husband did not leave me before it was already light : he took a last and very tender farewell of me, adding he should leave my father's immediately after breakfast. He advised me not to make my appearance till his departure, lest I should find it difficult to conceal my feelings. He again embraced me, promised to write to me, and took his leave.

Faithless, barbarous man!—Oh God! who could have expected such deceit! For three weeks I was left in all the agony of neglected love: I then heard, though not from himself, that he was gone abroad. My senses almost left me at this information, but I had still too much pride to discover my injuries. My health, however, was affected. My father perceived it, and sent me down to a bathing-place.

I will now finish my story. My father died in my absence, and, from a spirit of resentment, I gave my hand to my Lord Varnish, having first consulted a lawyer on the legality of such a step. I was under age when my first marriage was thus effected; it was performed contrary to the rites of our established Church, and my lawyer declared me free in law to marry again.

again. My resentment silenced my conscience, and I became Lady Varnish.

A servant has just brought me the following letter from my Lord.

“ MY LADY,

“ We have carried our election, and one half of the town is drunk with joy, and the other for consolation. Such, my dear, is the happy spirit of a free government : once in every seven years the whole nation may get drunk at the expence of their governors.

“ I never was a friend to what some people are pleased to call the liberties of their country ; and my Lord G—— himself shall confess that I rival even him in my efforts

to put an end to them. What, in fact, are these liberties? Why something that the people may sell, and that we, their governors, must buy. 'Tis a most insufferable piece of expence to us; one might almost buy a county for what it costs one to become its representative. However, I'll be even with them. They have cost me ten thousand pounds; and ten thousand pounds will I, by some means or other, make of them. I shall put them up to auction; and the devil may take them if he prove the best bidder.

“ As my business, therefore, is now over, I shall wait on your Ladyship immediately. Get a bed put up for me, unless you have a mind to be troubled with a bedfellow. I am really in an excellent humour, and shall become gallant presently. Without
flattery,

flattery, my dear, I think you the handsomest woman in England ; and considering we have been so long married, this compliment is not without its value. Marriage is, indeed, the severest test of both the beauty and the merit of the wife. You have stood this test, Madam, and therefore may claim the apple. I told you I should be gallant.

“ How do you go on with the young Savage ? Is she handsome, for I have never seen her ?—Adieu !—I shall be with you immediately. I am really in a hurry to embrace you.

* * * * *

“ I intended to have sent off this letter, but forgot it till the post had gone. I have now re-opened it, and having nothing
better

better to do, shall continue it to the end of my paper. I hear you have undertaken an affair of some difficulty in the instruction of the young Savage in fashionable manners. What could Sir Hilary mean by appointing you her bear-leader?—But take your revenge of her, by making her a source of your amusement. There are two ways of using a friend ; to use them to our own purposes is the most reasonable and the most fashionable. Follow my advice. I conclude this letter in the town of Newmarket. I am about to pursue my journey over the desolate heath with which this town is surrounded. The first thing I shall attempt in my new capacity of a Member of Parliament, shall be to get a Bill of Inclosure ; for the wind bites intolerably through this exposed road. Indeed this part of the country has no other appearance than that

of the abode of desolation ; and were Famine to appear in person, and seek a suitable site for her throne and palace, she could fix on no other place than Newmarket Heath.—
Adieu !

“ Your’s,

“ VARNISH.”

LETTER X.

From Miss Rachael to her Cousin Jenny.

DEAR JANE,

MY Lord has just arrived. He is a very agreeable man ; and if my Lady was not his wife, she could not help loving him.

I dare

I dare say you'll be surpris'd at this sentence ; but that will happen from your not being a woman of fashion. Love is a country ware, my dear, and may suit your groves and fields ; but we women of fashion—for I have already got the name of a girl of fashion—reject it as a prejudice, and laugh at its very name. You have a great deal to learn, cousin, and I think I'll undertake to teach you. Come, my dear, I'll give you a lesson as I have just received it myself.

As it happened to be a very fine day, my Lady, about two o'clock, ordered her carriage, and two gentlemen coming in as we were going to set off, persuaded them to attend us. As we drove down Piccadilly, my Lady looked up to the windows of a handsome house, and turning to one of
the

the gentlemen, asked him if Colonel Free-love and his Lady had settled their terms of separation?

“No, Madam,” replied he: “they have agreed to separate, but they cannot agree on what terms. The lady asks a third of his fortune to support her separate establishment; but as the Colonel represented to her that he had two mistresses, neither of whom it was in his power to shake off, she has taken that into her consideration, and lowered her demand to a quarter. I believe they will conclude upon this.”

“And has she any objection to any other of the articles?” asked the other gentleman.

“No,” replied the first speaker; “it would be rather extraordinary if she had, for they allow her every thing she can wish; she is to have whatever society, and of whatever sex she pleases. In return, she is

to

to permit the Colonel to reside with his mistress. They are both, you know, very fashionable people, and the separation agrees in every point with what the fashion of the day requires under such circumstances."

You will read this with the same astonishment I should have heard it a fortnight ago ; but I am now becoming a girl of fashion, and every body compliments me on my progress. I have now learned what matrimony, as well as religion, really is. The first, my dear, is a fashionable convenience to repair a ruined fortune, and the wife is of no other value than that of being the vehicle of her portion. And as for religion, it is an invention to preserve good manners in the vulgar, but is entirely useless to the superior knowledge of high life. But have a care, Jane, how you shew this
part

part of my letter to my uncle : he is too country-bred to relish the town fashions. I should not mention them to you, only that I wish you to have the same accomplishments as myself ; and as we learned to dance together, so to learn to be women of fashion together. But you lose a great deal by not being with us. I have learned something, indeed, by what my Lady has said to me, but a thousand times more by what I have seen and heard myself.

My Lady takes great pains with me, and my Lord has promised to assist in making me a complete woman of fashion. But there is one thing I find great difficulty in, and this is to understand their meaning by their words. Every thing has a fashionable name ; and the language of town and country is as different as that of two different

different nations.] When we learned French together, our stupid master used to tell us that a *faux-pas* was a slip of the foot :—now can you guess, my dear, what a *faux-pas* is in this town language? Why, what I dare not mention. But endeavour to conceive a married woman as wicked, or, in our town language, as gay as she well can be, and you will have an idea of a *faux-pas*.

It is in the same manner with almost every other word. My Lord was mentioning this morning that his dearest friend was ruined. I asked him why then he did not go to his assistance. He asked me what he had to do with him, and why he should assist him?—"Why," replied I, "an't he your friend?"

He

He laughed ; and I thought my Lady seemed vexed that I had so little improved under her, as to imagine it a duty of a man of fashion to assist a ruined man, because he happened to be his friend.

RACHAEL H——.

LETTER XI.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

MY Lord continues so civil to me, and so constantly attends on me, that I am almost inclined to believe he is really in love with me. Don't be frightened, cousin Jane ! This is the fashion here, and indeed
I think

I think one of the most reasonable they have. As a man is laughed at for loving his wife, it is but fair, I think, to allow him to love somebody else.

Sir Harry Loveday called upon us this morning, and my Lord proposed a party to Kensington Gardens. It was immediately accepted. My Lord took me in his curicle, and my Lady went with Sir Harry in his.

We soon arrived at the Gardens, and proceeded to walk. There was a great deal of company, and most of them were known, and addressed our party. Sir Harry and my Lord were very brilliant, and rallied the company very agreeably.—“That old gentleman there,” said Sir Harry, “separated from his still older wife last week. He has taken an Opera-dancer into his
house

house for a mistress, and his wife, who, as I have said, is still older than himself, has set up a faro-table, in conjunction with a young Nobleman, and they both live under the same roof."

"I have never seen a greater assemblage of fashion," said my Lord, "since I have visited these Gardens. But do you see that lady in yonder walk? She is a newly-married woman."

"A newly-married woman!" repeated my Lady; "why, it is my Lady —, and, to my knowledge, she has been married these ten years."

"You are very right, Madam," said his Lordship; "but what I have said is still true. She was married to her present husband only the day before yesterday."

"Then

“Then her former husband is dead?” said I.

“Not so either, Madam,” repeated he. “There—you saw that gentleman pass her in the walk, and touch his hat to her!—that was her husband a few days ago. And you see another gentleman now advancing, and taking her arm!—that, Madam, is her present husband.”

There’s for you, Jane—what do you think of this?—and when would your country education have taught you these fashions? Such a sight as this in your village would have called as great a mob around it as the travelling monkeys and mountebanks that visit your yearly fair. Two husbands, both living at the same time, and passing each other in the same walk—each civilly bowing to the other—the

the lady taking the arm of one of them, and the other passing her with a touch of his hat.

Such, my dear, are these charming fashions. Oh cousin Jane, what do you lose by being in the country ! To-morrow night we go to the play. My Lady cousin neglects nothing to make me a girl of fashion, and she tells me the playhouse and some of our best comedies will give me some useful hints to complete my fashionable education. I shall write to you to-morrow, and give you a description of my entertainment.—Good night at present ! Remember to read my letters with proper attention ; and as I always tell you what I see and hear, you may learn the fashions in the country.

Your's, &c.

RACHAEL.

LETTER XII.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

I HAVE just come from the play, and almost frightened out of my senses. Oh, such an event ! But I'll tell you every thing in order.

Sir Harry dined with us, in order to attend us to the Theatre. About seven o'clock we all got into our coach, that is to say, my Lord and Lady, Sir Harry, and myself. We soon arrived, took our places in a stage-box, and the play began. The name of the play was the Beggar's Opera.

But

But here I was again not a little surprised. As I knew that so many people of fashion so constantly attended the play-house, I had imagined to myself that a play was really a genteel thing, and in some degree suited to the polite company that was to see it; but I soon found that I had formed a very wrong opinion. The characters of the play, so far from being any thing of a genteel nature, were all either thieves or gaolers. The women were all what I will not mention, and the principal character of the piece is very near being hanged.

But some of the songs were delightful; and there were two singers, a Mrs. C—— and Mr. K——, whose performance gave me great pleasure. They both of them sung with the greatest taste, and in a style

superior to any thing I have ever heard. But I could not help thinking that Mr. K—— would have acted better if he had not been so full of ridiculous motions, and what my Lord called the mimicry of his character. He could scarcely say the slightest thing without accompanying it with some of these imitating motions. It is very foolish, too, his throwing glasses about. But perhaps this may be natural enough in the character of a highwayman. It is abominable, however, in a genteel character; or when a gentleman drinks a glass of wine, it is not very usual for him to throw his glass out of the window.

Out of compliment to me, as the play-house was a novelty, they staid to see the entertainment. It was much more intolerable than the play. If the play had some

vulgarity in its characters, it had a great deal of wit and sprightliness in its dialogue. But it was not so with the entertainment ; it was as stupid as it was low. I was out of all patience, and very glad when we returned to our coach.

As we drove home, the night being very fine, and our conversation interesting, Sir Harry whimsically proposed that we would take him to Richmond, where he is on a visit to my Lord ——. We laughed, and immediately agreed to take him half way. The coachman was ordered to drive in the Richmond road, but could scarcely forbear a stare of astonishment.

The conversation on the road turned upon the play we had just seen. My Lady V. said that the characters in the piece were

certainly all vulgar, but that this in her opinion shewed the greater genius of its author ; for how admirable is his ingenuity which has given such dialogue to such characters, and this without any apparent impropriety !

My Lord agreed to the justice of her remark, but added, that this was not the only objection to this play.—“ The Beggar’s Opera,” says he, “ is justly to be reprobated, on account of its moral : it is said to have sent many upon the road. What think you, Sir Harry ?”

“ Why, my Lord,” replied he, “ I cannot say I agree with you. The Beggar’s Opera, in my opinion, is a very harmless play ; it certainly presents the character of a successful highwayman. But if there be any thing criminal in the representation

representation of successful villany, we must burn even our gravest histories. But my opinion is, that a Macheath on the stage is to the full as harmless as a Cromwell in our history. I really think the play very harmless."

Sir Harry had scarcely done speaking, when we heard a horseman galloping behind us, and presently a tremendous voice exclaiming "Stop!"—A highwayman then came up to the side of the coach, and presenting a pistol, demanded our money. My Lady fainted, my Lord and Sir Harry both fired, and the fellow dropped. The gentlemen immediately got out to secure him. He was wounded in the side, but still attempted to make his escape. The noise of the pistols, however, brought up the patrol of the road, and the fellow was

taken into custody. My Lord and Sir Harry gave in their names, and promised to attend his examination the next morning. I shall write you an account of it, at least if it be worth the trouble.

Sir Harry then got into a coach, and proceeded on the remainder of his journey to Richmond. We recovered my Lady, and returned to town.—Good night, or rather good morning, for it is now two o'clock.

Your's, &c.

RACHAEL H.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

From Lady Varnish to Mrs. Frail.

DEAR FRAIL,

I HAVE once more to make my apologies that I have again passed one of our corresponding days without a letter ; but when I formed this engagement of a regular correspondence on these fixed and predetermined days, I did not so well consider the nature of the promise I made. I forgot that, before I could write, it would be necessary to have something to write about. A fashionable

H 5

life

life is certainly a life of hurry and bustle; but it is a hurry and bustle without much variety. The *beau monde* is always in motion, but its motion is nearly always the same. The rout of to-day has but little difference from the rout of to-morrow, and the card-table of Monday is the card-table of the week.

You must not think me, therefore, weary of writing to you if I sometimes intermit our correspondence: it will not be a dearth of friendship, but a dearth of matter that will prevent me. If I should still write regularly under such a poverty of all subject, my letters would soon resemble summer newspapers. I should still perhaps fill up my sheet in the same manner; but to do so, I should give you some paragraphs upon the high price of bread, and prove that

that butcher's meat might be well lowered a penny in the pound.

My Lord arrived here the other day in high spirits and good-humour. He has carried his election, but almost at the expence both of his estate and life. He was obliged to drink his constituents into good-temper, and, what was still worse, to pay for the entertainment of the horrid brutes. I can assure you his health has suffered very severely.

Such are the effects, as he himself says, of these odious liberties of the country. A man must really ruin himself to become a legislator, and to become a supporter of the constitution of his country must destroy his own. Our Members of Parliament are chosen like the presidents of a club. What-

think you, my dear, of my political talents?

But I have something to tell you of greater consequence. Attend then. It is this—that there is a mystery in my Lord's conduct with regard to my young *élève*, which I cannot unravel. He is too indolent and too fashionably indifferent in all gallantry to take the trouble of a seduction; yet it is certain that his present proceedings have a strong appearance of looking that way: he takes every opportunity to point out to her observation the fashionable morality of the day. His steps are very artful, and have made a strong impression on the girl's mind. He flatters himself that no one can penetrate into his views, and indeed he has had the dexterity to conceal them well; I can perceive, however, their general tendency.

He

He is certainly aiming at the young girl's affections, but to what further point his designs may extend, whether he seeks her person, or, what I am more inclined to imagine, some advantage from the use of her ample fortune, is what I have not as yet discovered. The girl is soon to chuse another guardian, and perhaps this may be one of his aims. There is a great mystery in his conduct; but my curiosity is on the wing to discover it, and I flatter myself I shall not be long so ignorant.

In the meantime, the girl improves wonderfully under our united tuition: she is really very handsome, and by the time you see her, you shall acknowledge very fashionable. She wants no instruction or advantage that either myself or my Lord can give her, and I must do her the justice to confess she
attends

attends to us *con amore*. But as we both know something of human nature, I mean female nature, we rather trust to example than precept. We lead her into the different scenes of the *beau-monde*, direct her regards to the acting characters, and leave her to draw her own conclusions. She thus becomes her own instructress, and her lesson, instead of a naked precept, which she might be apt to doubt, is a precept confirmed by an example which speaks intelligibly for itself.

I had almost forgotten to tell you that we were stopped by a highwayman last night. The fellow was taken; and an Officer came down to my Lord as we were at breakfast this morning, with a request from Sir W——A—— that he would attend his examination. He added that, as there
was

was a young lady in the coach, her attendance was likewise requisite. My young *élève*, therefore, was obliged to accompany my Lord, and I thought he did not appear displeased at this necessity. I will find out what he is aiming at. They have not yet returned from Bow-Street.—But what a long, tedious letter have I here written ! I will now, however, conclude it, and go into my Lord's study for its frank.—

Well, my dear, such a discovery ! When I concluded the above passage, I went down into my Lord's study for the purpose I mentioned. As I did not see the frank on the table, I opened a writing-desk, when an open letter, and in my Lord's own handwriting, caught my eye. I had the curiosity, call it if you please the impertinence, to take it up ; and it has furnished me with a
full

full confirmation of all my suspicions, though it has still left me in the dark as to the final object of his aim. But you will be better able to judge by reading it, and may help me to understand it. Here, therefore, it is, and exactly copied.

*From Lord Varnish to Lord Charles
Surface.*

“ DEAR SURFACE,

“ This infernal election has half ruined me, and I have not become a Member of Parliament for nothing. The rogues had the impudence to raise the price of their consciences, and votes were as dear as venison. Unfortunately, too, the returning Officer being an honest man, and refusing
to

to wink on some slight irregularities, a few perjuries became necessary, and they took advantage of it to make a most extravagant demand. One sturdy rascal said he would not take a false oath for ten pounds. They all followed him, and I was obliged to give twelve. A curse take the extortioning rascals ! If the consciences of the whole corporation had been thrown up together in one heap, and put up to fair auction, the devil would not have purchased them at the price of a load of horse-dung. To me, however, they were necessary ; the rogues knew it, and raised their price accordingly.

“ They had the further insolence, after my election, to bring me a whole string of petitions, which they instructed me to lay before the House ; but here I stopped them, — ‘ Gentlemen,’ said I, ‘ if you had chosen
me

me to your Borough, I should have been its servant ; but as you have sold me your Borough, you must permit me to consider myself as its master.'

" Here they began hissing me, but I still continued—

' Yes, gentlemen, I repeat it again, your master, and by the same title as I am master of the horse I now ride. Both the horse and the Borough are my property by purchase ; I have paid a fair price for you both. For your Borough, indeed, I fear I have paid too much, and more than I shall be able to sell you for again. Go, my honest friends,' added I ; ' your petitions may suit your interest, but they do not exactly tally with mine.'

" Saying which, I spurred my horse, the
whole

whole town hissing and hooting; but I took no other notice of them than to give them a damn for their venality, and ride away to represent them.

“ I have considerably injured my fortune, but my luck and wit have furnished me with an opportunity to repair it. You have seen, I think, Sir Hilary's niece, Miss Rachael, and know that she has an immense fortune. She is now in the same house with me, and under the tuition of my Lady V. Her Ladyship has undertaken to form her into a woman of fashion; but it is for me to complete her in that character. You will ask me, perhaps, what I mean:—I answer, wait the event. You may take this in the meantime, that I want the lady's fortune, and shall have no objection to her person. You will again ask me if I mean to seduce her. I again answer you, No. I think no
woman

woman worth the trouble of a seduction.

'What then do you mean?' you'll cry out.

I again answer you—wait the event.

“In the meantime, my designs proceed as I could wish, and I have not a doubt of my success. The girl already thinks more favourably of me than of any man she has yet seen. She is already rid of these country prejudices, that rustic morality which might frighten her at the addresses, though ever so indirect, of a married man. I say *addresses*, for it is one part of my plan to obtain her young heart. When I have once succeeded in this, and am in a fair way of success, I'll inform you of the next step I must make, and perhaps I may want your assistance. But adieu for the present!

“Your's,

“VARNISH.”

There,

There, my dear, what do you now think of my conjectures ? I saw that my Lord had some design, but I could not discover what it was ; and this letter leaves us still in the dark upon that point. But I must now conclude, for I hear the Bow Street party have just returned.

Your's,

E. VARNISH.

LETTER

LETTER XIV.

From Miss Rachael H. to her Cousin Jane.

DEAR JANE,

WE have just returned from Bow Street, and you shall have an account of what passed, which I assure you is not a little singular. Sir Harry breakfasted with my Lord, and they proposed attending the examination together ; but a Police Officer came to the house, and said it was necessary that I should attend. The coach was therefore ordered, and my Lord, Sir Harry, and myself

myself drove off. My Lady staid at home to write letters.

We soon arrived at the office, and were led to the room of examination. My Lord and Sir Harry entered it first ; but catching sight of the prisoner, they both gave a start, my Lord exclaiming—"Is it possible?"

"Yes, my Lord," replied the prisoner, "it is possible—yes, Sir Harry, you now see your companion in a highwayman!—You see, Sir," turning to the Justice, "my connections are not despicable."

It is impossible, my dear, to describe the astonishment both of the Justice and the Court at this address. The fellow spoke, too, with a satirical and malicious sneer on his countenance. Sir Harry and my Lord were both equally confounded, and the
more

more so, as the Court was very unusually full.

The Justice turned to my Lord.—“ My Lord, shall I thank you to explain this ? ”

My Lord, however, did not answer.

“ Sir Harry,” resumed the Justice, “ shall I thank you to explain ? ’Tis a very odd circumstance, Gentlemen ! Is this man an acquaintance of your’s ? ”

The gentlemen were both too confounded to answer, and every body stared with astonishment. The fellow resumed his speech.—“ If your Worship will permit me to speak, I can explain it. Sir Harry and my Lord are both my acquaintances ; I have been admitted to their tables, and have sat with
them

them as their equals. They have won my money, and I have won their's. Yes, gentlemen," turning to Sir Harry and my Lord, "you have been the first cause of that crime which you now appear to prosecute."

My Lord and Sir Harry asked permission to retire; but the Justice told them that it could not be allowed, and that when a man's life was the question, the law could not consider any feelings of delicacy.—“You seem,” added he, “to have acted very imprudently, and you must now take the consequences of a public exposure. I cannot help it, gentlemen—justice demands the man should have a full hearing.—Have you any thing to say, friend?” turning to the man.

“I have, Sir,” replied the fellow, “and what may repay the Court for the trouble

of hearing me. If it will not acquit me of the charge, it may excite the pity of the Court."

"Well," replied the Justice, "give an account of yourself."

"I will, Sir," added the fellow, "and a full one too."

He then began.

"My father was a reputable tradesman, and when I was of a proper age, took me apprentice to himself. For a long time I conducted myself with honesty and industry: a small allowance by the week enabled me to attend the playhouse. This was the first cause of my present misfortune.

"My father, who was a plain, honest tradesman, had taught me that all vice was
hateful,

hateful, and that dishonesty was the worst of vices ; but when I visited the playhouses, I soon rejected this as an error. I saw a Brass, or a Dick Amlet, or a Macheath act their rogueries with success and applause. It was true they were only the characters of a play, but a play I was told was an imitation of life.

“ My fondness for plays increased, and my weekly allowance was insufficient to indulge my propensity. I applied myself, therefore, to my father’s till. I excused myself to my own mind by some examples from my favourite plays.—‘ Dick Amlet,’ said I to myself, ‘ robs his mother, and the theft is only laughed at both by the author of the play and his audience. That cannot therefore be so hateful which is thus a subject of only light raillery. My constant

attendance at the playhouse soon introduced me into scenes of fashion and gaiety. I happened one night to assist a gentleman in some dispute in the lobby : he was grateful for the favour, and carried me home to supper with him. As I dressed well, he made no enquiries. Being a member of a celebrated gambling society, he introduced me to the rooms, and Sir Harry's introduction silenced all suspicions."

Here all in the Court turned their eyes on Sir Harry : he affected to use his handkerchief to conceal his confusion, and the fellow again proceeded.

" By Sir Harry's assistance then I was thus seated at a gambling table. I was now intoxicated with vanity at the splendour of my

my society, and determined, at whatever cost, to support it. At first I played only because play was necessary to keep my place ; but Sir Harry had soon the merit of inspiring me with the true spirit of gaming. My visits to the till became more frequent, and my father at length discovered the theft.

“ The night before last I attended the rooms, and played with more variety of fortune than usual. The morning obliged us to rise from the tables, when I found myself considerably in debt to my Lord Varnish.”

Here every body looked at my Lord. The fellow continued, and, as I thought, with a kind of a sneer—“ Sir Harry, however, was kind enough to save my honour ; he paid my Lord the money, and I promised

to repay him immediately. On my return home I went to the till for that purpose ; but my father had discovered my former thefts, and the till was removed.

“ This was a misfortune I had not foreseen : it cut off at one stroke all the resources of my former pleasures. I was unwilling, however, to sacrifice the acquaintance of Sir Harry, and walked out to consider some means of repaying him. Chance led me to the doors of the Theatre : I entered, and saw the Beggar’s Opera. The character of Macheath was well acted. A hint struck across my mind at the end of the fourth act. I rushed out of the house, mounted my horse, and took the road.”

Your’s,

RACHAEL.

LETTER

LETTER XV.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

I HAVE got such a habit of writing, that I am now as regular at my pen as I formerly was at my prayers. I have undertaken, you know, to give you the same lessons I have received myself, and I can only do this by describing the same scenes. My Lady does not teach me the *beau-monde* as a governess would do ; she does not say, *do this, and forbear that*, but she carries me into all its scenes, and gives me no other precept but to use my eyes. Whatever I see in the day, I think upon at night.

I will endeavour to give you the same advantages : I will present you every night with the circumstances of the day. You must consider my letters as a kind of fables, where certain characters are put in action, and it is left to your own ingenuity to find the moral.

Sir Harry breakfasted with us again this morning. During our continuance at table, a servant entered with a paper in his hand ; and being asked what he had there, answered that a lady had given it him at the door, and waited without for an answer. Sir Harry took it from him, and read it. It appeared to be a petition from an emigrant French family of distinction, who were now reduced to the greatest distress, though formerly of the first fortune in their own country. The husband himself was absent abroad,

abroad, in the army of the Prince of Condé, and the petition was brought by his wife. It stated that she could not have been induced to make the present application, but that her young family were in the greatest distress.

The petition was very simple and very pathetic, and the gentlemen declared it to be written with a most uncommon eloquence. My Lady was evidently affected. Sir Harry added that he had little doubt of its being genuine.

Upon this I immediately felt for my purse; but my Lady checked me, and I returned it to my pocket. My Lady then took the petition from Sir Harry, returned it to the servant, and bade him take it back to the lady.

“ And what answer, Madam ?” said the man.

“ Hey !” said my Lady ; “ why where did you live last, John, that you do not know how to answer such questions ?”

“ With a Jew, Madam,” replied the man, “ where a petition was never sent back without something for the petitioner.”

“ Well, friend,” says my Lord, “ you now live with a man of fashion ; so return the petition, and say that the family are not at home.”

When the man had left the room, the gentlemen began laughing at his odd reply, that his former service had been that of a Jew. My Lord, however, said that the fellow was a pithy knave, and he was mistaken if he did not mean something by his retort.

A loud

A loud knock at the door announced some visitor, and one of the managers of the Opera was introduced.

“Oh, true,” says my Lady, “we must pay our Opera subscription. Have you paid your’s, Sir Harry?”

Sir Harry declared he had not, but would now follow her Ladyship’s example. My Lady then threw down fifty guineas, and Sir Harry paid a subscription of twenty. The servant, who had made the odd retort to my Lady, shook his head, and I heard him mutter—“I’ll go back to my Jew again.”

Your’s,

RACHAEL H.

LETTER XVI.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

I GAVE you a short lesson yesterday—I shall give you a longer to-day. Every day I become more and more acquainted with the *beau-monde*, and, as my Lord and Lady tell me, shall soon complete my progress. *A-propos* of my Lord; he is certainly what you country people call in love with me. He almost made me a declaration yesterday; and when I smiled and mentioned his Lady, declared that he respected her, but he—— And here he was pleased
to

to affect a cough—a kind of fashionable impudence, or rather impudent modesty which you have no idea of in the country.

You'll ask me how I received this speech and conduct of my Lord. Why, as a girl of fashion ought to receive it!—I struck him with my fan, laughed, and ran away.

After our breakfast my Lord proposed a party to an auction of pictures at Christie's Rooms. My Lady agreed to it. The coach was ordered, and we drove off.

When we arrived at the rooms, we found them full of company.—“Good Heaven,” said I, “are all these people come to buy pictures?”

“No,” replied my Lord, “nor one half of them.”

“For

“For what then are they here?” rejoined I.

“For the same purpose,” replied my Lord, “that leads them to every place where they can have no business—the same purpose that leads them to a Church, though they never pray—to a playhouse, though they never listen—and to an Opera, though they never understand. In short, to kill that worst of all enemies, Time!”

Sir Harry now joined us, and the auction began. I saw a fat, vulgar looking man, who seemed the foremost amongst the bidders. He outbid the whole company, and raised the prices to the highest extravagance. His eagerness for such elegant pictures, contrasted with a meanness of appearance, and a heaviness of look, struck me with the greatest astonishment. I turned
to

to my Lord.—“Is it possible, my Lord,” said I, “that that man can want pictures?”

“No, cousin,” replied he, “but he wants furniture. He is a man who has made his fortune in India, and is now going to furnish his house. Pictures, he thinks, will look better on his walls than paper.”

A gentleman here turned round to my Lord.—“Plague take the fellow!” cried he, pointing to the auctioneer; “do you know, my Lord, he has knocked me down that cursed picture there!”

“You bid for it, I suppose,” said Sir Harry.

“Yes,” rejoined he, “but I had no intention of buying it.”

“Then why did you bid for it?” added my Lord.

“Because,” replied he, “the picture is

a fine one, and my mistress happens to be in the room."

I have now been a woman of fashion for some weeks, and was beginning to imagine that nothing could astonish me. I now perceived my error, for the next picture that was set up surprised even me. It was a Venus and an Adonis by Titian, very finely painted, but I thought a great deal too free. Sir Harry, however, began bidding for it immediately. My Lord made him a bow, and bid against him. The picture was immediately knocked down to my Lord. He desired it to be sent home, and then turning to my Lady, to my further astonishment presented it to her to hang up in her dressing-room.

The picture has been since sent home,
and

and my Lady and myself have been to look at it. You must not wonder at this, for nobody minds an indecent picture, provided it was Titian or Raphael that drew it. There was an auction at G—— House last week, when a lady of quality openly bid for the statue of a naked Hercules. The wits have been a little merry upon it ; but the lady is comforted by the connoisseurs, who all acknowledge it as a proof of her taste for the natural.

And these pictures, too, are not without their use, and particularly if there be any young ladies in the family. You will not understand me till I explain myself. Attend then.

When you first see a woman of fashion, there is nothing will strike you as more
singular

singular than a certain open boldness in her countenance, a certain happy confidence of face, and an eye that will meet and retort the most impudent look of the most impudent man living. Now this is what I have hitherto found very difficult to learn ; and there are many young ladies, very fashionable in all other points, who are yet very imperfect in this. But when such pictures as this are hung up in the parlours, they have only to visit them a few times, and my word for it they'll soon acquire this fashionable confidence. I mean to form myself by this method. I shall visit the above picture an hour every day, and I flatter myself I shall soon reap great profit. Without vanity, my dear, I think I shall acquire, in about a week's time, this art of never blushing.

As we returned home, we paid a visit to the jewel shop in Spring Gardens. Whilst Sir Harry and my Lady were busy in one part of the shop, my Lord took me aside in the other, and presented me with some jewels. He pressed my hand as he put them into it, desiring me to slip them into my pocket, for that there was no occasion that my Lady should see them. Such a secrecy would have frightened you poor country ladies, and you would have thought it the next step to something very bad. Here, however, nothing is more common : husband and wife are here two distinct parties. Marriage may render them man and wife ; but it still leaves the one a man of fashion, and the other a woman of fashion.

But I have now a secret to tell you, and shall want your assistance to escape a difficulty.

difficulty. I have just received a very angry letter from my country lover, young Squire Robert. He complains that I have not answered his letters these three weeks—talks a great deal of constancy, broken fixpences, true love, and locks of hair, and finishes his letter with an angry sentence. You shall have it for its ridiculous dolorousness.

“ Oh Rachael, Rachael !” says my poor swain (I believe, though, there are three Ohs !) “ and are you at length become faithless ?—are all your promises come to this ? You have not answered me a letter for these three weeks ; you have grown too fine a woman to remember Squire Robert !”

The poor shepherd is very right, my dear ; I really forgot him for these three weeks past, and if ever I remember him
now,

now, 'tis only that I may hit upon some method to get fairly rid of him. To use his own words—"I have grown too fine a woman for Squire Robert."

The truth is, my dear, that I must disencumber myself of this country connection, this first love. Squire Robert will never suit a girl of fashion. But how shall I go about it? This would be no difficulty here, for constancy is not one of the fashions; but in the country, the odious country, one must as little change one's mind with a once accepted lover as with a husband. You must contrive something that will free me from this embarrassment;—and stay—a thought has struck me!—I have ordered him not to dance with Miss R——. Now you can contrive it that he cannot avoid it. This will furnish me with a fair pretence to quarrel with him. I'll write him

him a thundering letter, and dismiss him for ever—and so good night to poor Squire Robert!

I shall write to you to-morrow.—Good night.

Your's,

RACHAEL.

LETTER XVII.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

YOU tell me, my dear, that it is a charity to write to you, and that, next to being yourself an actor or spectator, nothing affords

affords you more pleasure than the representation of the world of fashion. Indeed, there is one advantage, and perhaps not a slight one, in this second-hand instruction. The geographers will tell you that, by the use of their maps, you may travel over the world whilst in your arm-chair, and visit every province in Europe without any expence of posting. It is in the same manner with my letters : you must consider them as a species of chart of the *beau-monde*. By their means you have all the pleasures without any thing of the fatigue of the ball. You can visit the masquerade without a ticket or domino ; or hover on the wings of fancy through all the mazes of the ball, without that weariness of dress and preparation which is no small deduction from the satisfaction of fashionable pursuits. Indeed I have not rashly compared this *beau-monde*

to

to a science ; for I know nothing more difficult to learn, or which requires more attention or more natural genius. There are some natures which are utterly incapable, either for want of readiness of comprehension, or some other cause, of attaining this knowledge.

One of the first, and, in all other respects, most amiable personages in the kingdom, the Duchess of Y——, is of this number ; for though she has passed her life in every sphere of fashion, she has made so little progress in its precepts, that she is daily committing a thousand mistakes, which excite the astonishment of the *beau-monde*. She is conscientiously strict in the discharge of every conjugal and Christian duty, though conjugal faith and Christianity are in equal repute—that is to say, are equally subjects
of

of ridicule throughout every circle of the *ton*. She patronizes those public charities which it is the fashion to overlook, and overlooks those polite institutions, the Italian Opera and the Pic-Nic Theatre, which it is equally the fashion to encourage. In a word, she has committed so many of these unfashionable errors, that nothing but her high dignity could secure her from ridicule; and if she continues them much longer, even that dignity will avail her little. It is one distinction of the *beau-monde* that all heretics from its system are excluded from the communion of the faithful. By a word peculiar to the *beau-monde*, and which I must therefore explain, they are voted a *bore*; and they are no sooner branded with this appellation, than they sink into a neglect and contempt from which a Peerage itself will not raise them.

The mention of this word recalls to my memory that part of your letter where you complain that you are frequently at a loss to understand, and add that your brother's College exercises are more intelligible than many parts of my letters. I will now, therefore, endeavour to relieve you from this perplexity, and present you with a vocabulary, or portable dictionary, of the language of the *beau-monde*. As the definition is sometimes rather long, I shall put the word above, and subjoin to it the explanation.

The human race, according to the moral writers, is divided into two species—good men and bad men. The language of the *beau-monde* preserves this division, but makes a slight variation of the terms. The good and bad of the moralists are changed by the

the *beau-monde* into *good company* and *bad company*.

GOOD COMPANY.

Any one on the list of Peerage; any Member of Parliament; Officers of the Guards; Colonels of every description; any one who is willing to lose, or has credit enough to be admitted to win an estate; Dowagers with good jointures; epicures with good receipts; pimps of ready talents; any who can dress to the point of the mode, provided only that he exercise no visible trade—that is to say, any one who has no other means of livelihood but his wits:—all, or any of these, are men of fashion, and are comprehended under the general term of *good company*.

BAD COMPANY.

Any one who is neither on the list of Peerage, nor within the call of the House, and, having neither of these, nor any of the before-mentioned distinctions, has no fashionable talent to supply their defect; any one who observes the divisions of nature, and calls night and day by the rules of astronomy; any one who avoids the gaming-table as a scene of ruin; any one who would hesitate to risk his fortune, and, having lost it to the winner, would not recover it by the sacrifice of his wife's honour; or any one who, though he admired the beauty or wit of the wife of his friend, would hesitate to seduce her:—all, or any of these, are men of no fashion or no company. The *beau-monde*, moreover, in imitation of the schools, has its *negative* and *affirmative*—
its

its *somebody* and its *nobody*. Its *somebody* answers to the description already given of *good company* ; its *nobody* may merit further explanation.

NOBODY.

The *beau-monde*, like the chance world of Descartes, is composed of a certain number of circles ; all who live in these circles are the native and legitimate offspring and children of fashion : each of these, therefore, are *somebody* ; but as by far the greater part of his Majesty's subjects are excluded from this distinguishing privilege, they are marked with the general name of *nobody*.

I received, a few days ago, a letter from a fashionable friend, in which was the following passage :—

“ There is nothing, my dear, so dull as this dullest of all towns : the streets, indeed, are crowded, but there is really nobody here. The playhouse was so full, and so warm with the odious multitude, that I had much difficulty to support it ; but though I threw my eyes into every corner of the house, I saw nobody. The public mall is every day crowded ; but the company consists of nobody. I have enquired the character, quality, &c. &c. of the stranger we met at the Wells : I find she is very charitable, and much beloved in her sphere, but that she is nobody ; I have therefore dropped the acquaintance.”

There, cousin, I hope I have now explained this term *nobody* to your satisfaction. To confess the truth, it has given me
no

no small trouble to give these definitions. The language of the *beau-monde* is so peculiar to itself, and so contrary to our usual acceptance of the terms which it employs, that it will require some time and some efforts of study to comprehend it. But do not despair; every thing is possible to industry, united with genius. To do you justice, you do not want the latter; and I flatter myself I shall be able to excite you by a spirit of emulation to the former.

To proceed, therefore, with my definitions of the vocabulary of the *beau-monde*, I again summon you to attention, for you will have need of your utmost wit. If you have ever read your grandmamma's *Whole Duty of Man*, you must remember the remark, or precept, that the system of our

K 4

duties

duties depends in a great degree upon our situation, and that every state has duties peculiar to itself. It is in this manner with the *beau-monde*. The other part of the world is governed by a system of duties which we call *morality*—the *beau-monde* by a system which is distinguished by the name of *honour*.

HONOUR.

Honour, as may indeed be collected from what we have above said, may be considered as a more lax morality; it is a principle whose curb is less sharp, and whose reins are less strict than what morality imposes upon their humbler fellows. Thus morality teaches us to discharge every due; but honour extends this precept only to those debts which it dignifies with its own name.

Morality

Morality teaches us to abstain from every injury, whether upon the peace or property of our neighbour; but honour limits this prohibition to the narrowest bounds—it allows us to seduce either the wife or daughter of a friend, but commands us to give him satisfaction—that is to say, to endeavour to shoot him through the head. Nor is it less easy with regard to our attempts upon his property; for should a man of fashion understand a game, and know his friend to be utterly ignorant of it, honour will allow him to make every advantage of his superior skill, and win the fortune, even to the last shilling, of his credulous adversary. And should this adversary be a woman, and she find it in any manner inconvenient to pay the full amount of her loss, honour will allow her to complete the balance by

the sacrifice of her person. In a word, honour is a species of fashionable morality which can justly be compared to nothing but an *Highgate oath*: it admits every thing to which one can feel the slightest inclination, and prohibits nothing but what one might easily avoid without such prohibition.

I have mentioned, in a preceding paragraph, a letter which I received a few days since from a young lady of fashion. As it contains all these fashionable terms, I will present you with the whole, and it may serve you as a kind of exercise in the preceding vocabulary. As it cannot fail to improve you, perhaps to entertain you, I shall give it you, without the abridgement of a single word, in its full length. I shall have occasion, however, in some places, to
make

make my remarks upon it ; for as you are not as yet perfect in the science of the *beau-monde*, there are parts which will require a comment.

To Miss Rachael H.

“ MY DEAR CREATURE,

“ I am really dead, and you must consider this letter as coming rather from my shade than myself. This most odious of all towns!—Horrible town! What crime have I committed that should merit a punishment like this—a banishment from the capital in the very meridian of its splendour, and a confinement to the dulness of a provincial city? Could not my uncle have been troubled with the gout, but

what I must be called to attend him, and in the course of attendance, be perhaps killed with the spleen? Really there is nothing more troublesome than these relations. A prude, in a celebrated French comedy, wishes that the human race might be propagated and kept up like *cabbages*; and though a woman, I could almost join in the wish to escape from the tribe of impertinent relations.

“ It was no later than yesterday fortnight that my father sent me one of the most extraordinary letters ever received by a girl of fashion. He commanded me to take no more of my moonlight walks with Colonel Brilliant. Could any thing be more absurd than such a prohibition? The Colonel, as every body knows, is a man of the first fashion, and therefore it can be no disgrace to

to be seen in his company. Besides this, I might add that we never are seen ; for as the Colonel admires solitude, we are careful to chuse the most solitary walks, and such as are at the greatest distance from the town. Add to this, that my maid, Flip-pant, always attends behind us, and that I have given her a strict command never to be out of call ; so that, should the Colonel be rude, I could always summon her to my assistance. The Colonel's man, moreover, Setter, has taken a fancy to the girl ; and as he is employed in entertaining her during the conversation of his master and myself, he is no less at my call than the girl herself, and would doubtless remonstrate with his master, should he attempt any rudeness.

“ You may perceive, from these circumstances, how very innocent and very secure
these

these walks must be, and therefore how unreasonable are the complaint and prohibition of my father! But, as the Colonel says, all fathers are alike, and there is but one way in which a girl of fashion should receive such remonstrances—that is to say, she should treat them with the contempt they merit.”

* * * * *

I shall here, cousin Jane, give you a short comment upon the above passage. There are two things (as the Parsons say) to which I must here direct your attention. In the first place—you cannot fail to remark with what attention my fashionable friend regards her relations, and more particularly her father. She justly considers that it is a thing of chance, and not of choice, to be a father; and that as the gift of her life

cannot

cannot be considered as any voluntary favour to herself, she cannot imagine herself bound to owe him any thing upon that score. You will find some difficulty, I fear, to comprehend the whole force of this argument ; and, to confess the truth, I did not understand it myself till my Lord had the goodness to explain it to me : but I now comprehend it perfectly, and have by these means got above those country prejudices, which impose upon us that heavy burden of obligation to our more immediate relations. If my uncle should have a gout, I would not indeed hesitate to help him to his crutch ; but having given it to him, I should think it a very sufficient support without adding the offer of my arm.

In the second place—this passage of my
3 friend's

friend's letter will confirm my definition of the morality of the *beau monde*. How would they stare in your odious country should a young lady indulge herself in any of the innocent liberties of which she has made mention!—yet the morality of fashion—I mean the manners of high life, permit it all. Indeed nothing can be more common, or less thought of, than a walk by moonlight. If the husband of a fashionable woman be out of temper—if he treat her with too much neglect, and any more intolerable harshness, a man like the Colonel is always at hand to accompany her in a walk by moonlight, and the lady returns in the best temper and in the most agreeable spirits. Is a young Miss devoured by the spleen or vapours, a walk by moonlight with a man like the Colonel is certain to restore her. I have indeed frequently seen some of these ladies

ladies on their return from these moonlight wanderings, and have been, sometimes surprised at the sudden and favourable change of their looks and appearance. Their complexions, which but a few minutes before were of a deadly pale, have been suddenly improved into the glow of health, and their eyes appeared to sparkle with new lustre. Such is the efficacy of the moonlight walks of the people of fashion.

I will now present you with the remainder of my friend's letter, but with the omission of those passages which are not to my present purpose. After some flourishes, she thus proceeds :—

* * * * *

“What could Lady Belle mean by saying that I should find any body here? I have

have been here these two months, but I have as yet seen nobody. The Church is indeed crowded on a Sunday, but there is absolutely not a soul there. There is not a man of fashion within fifteen miles of us, and even at that distance there are only two—one of them Mr. Shuffle, who has lately lost an estate at Hazard, and Colonel Cog, who won it. These are the only two men of fashion in the country. I pray my stars that I may soon escape from it !

“ Lady Belle moreover added, that there was not unfrequently some good company in the next town of ——. I really wish to know what my Lady Belle can mean by this egregious misrepresentation. You will ask me, perhaps, whether so rich a neighbourhood cannot afford one circle of good company. No, my dear, not one ! I hear, indeed,

indeed, that the Dowager Countess — had a rustic route, and that with some difficulty she had summoned some good company. Shuffle and Cog were both there, and, with about three more of their companions, made up all the fashion which attended. It is really a wretched neighbourhood!—nothing to be seen but great trees—nothing to be heard but the ear-piercing whistling or boisterous merriment of village hinds. Oh that I could again return to the dear bustle of London!—but the wish is vain, for my uncle's gout has returned.

“ I have no news to write ; for as you know nothing of any one here, you would hear about their concerns with as much indifference as myself. I had almost forgotten to tell you that Mr. Shuffle is to dine
with

with us to-morrow. It is said that his estate is scarcely sufficient to pay his losses to the Colonel; but as Shuffle is a man of most undoubted honour, it is believed he will find some way to supply the deficiency. He is the guardian of an heiress of a great property: he may turn this, perhaps, to some account, though it is rather believed he will endeavour to persuade his wife to surrender her settlement.

“ There is one circumstance which gives great strength to this report. His wife and himself were lately on what we call *fashionable terms*—that is to say, on no terms at all: but now that the husband has lost his estate, the wife seems to have regained his affection. This change is therefore justly suspected to point at her settlement. I cannot, however, determine with any exactness upon this point,

point, but I will venture to assert as certain, that the Colonel will not lose a guinea of his full demand; for Shuffle is a man of such perfect honour, that he will pay his loss, though he should sell both his wife and ward.

“Your’s, &c. &c.”

There, my dear, what think you of this letter, which I have given you word for word? It will give you no small insight into the language and principles of the *beau monde*. Read it again and again: you cannot expect to become a woman of fashion without much pains, and long and steady attention. You shall want nothing that I can confer for this purpose. Next to the pleasure of learning is that of teaching: I again, therefore, promise that I will describe
with

with equal fidelity and minuteness whatever scenes I may happen to visit.

* * * * *

I have written this long letter in the interval between dressing and dinner, and I hope, cousin, it has served to enliven your time as it has to kill mine. Hark!—the bell rings, and I must attend below.—But first I will consult my glass!——I have pleased myself prodigiously! What would my uncle think, were he to see me now?—Adieu!

Your's,

RACHAEL H.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

I SUMMON you to attention again. This morning my Lord put a newspaper into my hands, which he called the Chronicle of Fashion—The Register of the Polite World. —“Here, my dear,” said he, “you will not be puzzled with politics and parties, but will learn the more useful intelligence of the *beau monde*. You will have here dispatches from drawing-rooms, routs, and assemblies, and will see

“Who gave the ball, and who the supper last.”

“You

“ You will find these, my dear, far different from your country newspapers,” added my Lady. “ They are, indeed, odious trash !—News from the Assizes—the Judge’s charge—horse and cock-matches—and all the vulgar scandal of a race-ball !”

“ The best intelligence with them,” continued my Lord, “ is certainly what your Ladyship has mentioned ; but here,” holding up the newspaper, “ instead of the list of condemned criminals, you have the names of the visitants at every fashionable party ; and instead of an account of the convicts sentenced to Botany Bay, you have the arrangements of the *beau-monde* for a whole winter to come.”

“ Why, really, my Lord,” cried I, “ the news in a country paper is nothing more than that Lord Startall’s Jeffamy ran against Squire Coverly’s Eclipse, and *distanced him*
hollow

hollow the first heat!—that the bay filly has won the subscription purse, and the three-years-old colt has put in for the sweepstakes. Then comes some filthy nonsense about the great horse Sampson and his groom, and an advertisement from the best feeder of fighting cocks.

* * * * *

I must now write you a description of a supper party. “Imagine me there, at a very full and elegant table. All was noise and confusion for some time, and I could neither hear nor talk. At length I was able to listen to the conversation of my neighbours, and as it is such as will give you an insight into what is termed the amusement of good company, and the essence of fashionable conversation, I shall transcribe as much of it as I can recollect.

“ I’ll lay you a thousand guineas,” cried a gentleman, “ she had paint on an inch thick !”

“ Don’t lay,” cried a second ; “ I saw it with my own eyes.”

“ So did I,” exclaimed a third ; “ her face has naturally a pretty strong down upon it ; and, egad ! I could see it peeping through the varnish, like hair through a trowel of mortar !”

“ Egad, very true !” cried the first ; “ and for the same reason she lets the *bristles* grow on her cheeks, that they may hold the enamel together.”

Here there was a loud laugh from the company, and the gentleman who began the conversation being a noble Peer, enjoyed the full triumph of his wit.

“ Nay,

“Nay, upon my word,” cried a lady, “she whom you have been abusing, my Lord, is my very particular friend, and you should at least spare her character before me.”

“On the contrary, Madam,” returned the Peer, “I speak before you because you are her friend, and are best qualified to know if I report truth.”

“Your Lordship is really candid, but I must confess her face was not made badly last night.”

“Indeed it was,” exclaimed a second lady, “but it was not from want of taste in herself, but inattention in her maid, who, out of revenge for her mistress’s rivalling her with a favourite footman, only finished one side, and left the other of a pale white, without a streak of carnation.”

“Aye, that she did,” cried an old Dowager, “which made her right cheek for all the

world like a new brick house, and her left like an old white-washed wall !”

A loud laugh was again echoed from every part of the table, and the conversation was now thought, as it is usually termed, extremely brilliant.

“ Nay, ’pon my privilege,” continued my Lord, “ her maid and she are excellent hands !—quite Michael Angelo and Caracci. Let one design, and t’other finish, and you have the most perfect piece in the world ! Egad ! but Abigail shall be my toast ! I recommended her to my old aunt, Lady Fly flap.”

“ What,” cried a General, “ to her ! Why she——”

“ Aye, I know what you are going to say,” replied my Lord : “ if she spent half
the

the money in refitting her old mansion-house that she does in repairing the ruins of her face, so much the better for me who am her *heir*."

"Why, my Lord," cried a lady, "is it possible that old woman can be still alive?"

"To my sorrow, Madam," rejoined the Peer, "and last autumn and my physician have disappointed me."

"Faith!" cried the General, "her Ladyship is like a man of war, and paint only serves to hold her timbers together."

"Well, I vow," exclaimed a young lady, "old Lady Flyflap's face looks mighty young."

"True," cried my Lord, "young as the creation; and, d—me, but it is half as old!"

Again the Peer was cheered with bursts of laughter, and began to plume himself prodigiously on the success of his wit.

“But what do you think, my Lord,” interrupted the General, “of Miss Biddy Bidwell? She, I recollect, is to your Lordship’s taste.”

“*Was—was*, my dear General,” replied the Peer. “Let this glass be my poison, but she was once a fine, very fine girl!—But then, let me see;—egad! ’twas before I bought my title, and that’s now in its tenth year.”

“Miss Bidwell, however,” rejoined another lady, “is now come out by way of revival, with new scenery and decorations.”

“Aye,” said another, “but she won’t go down now—the stamp is too antique. Ben
Johnson

Johnson and Biddy Bidwell won't suit the present taste."

"No, no," cried the Baronet, "we can't agree to that; I hate a dish twice served up, however dressed and garnished. I am willing enough to praise the cook, but won't be persuaded to taste it a second time."

"'Pon my word," cried an elderly lady, "you are all mighty severe on Miss Bidwell, and take no notice of Lady Grotesque."

"She!" cried the Peer, "is she alive? "I had a scarf and hatband sent for her funeral these five years ago."

"Faith!" added the General, "I always thought she died in childbed, when she brought her husband, who you know, my Lord, was a poor old crippled fellow of seventy, *three children at a birth!*"

"Fie! fie!" cried a lady, "you mistake;

it was *twins*. I, for one, as a relation, went to wish my Lord joy of an *heir*; and the old man was thrown into such a perilous passion, *for what I can't tell*, that I was glad to make my escape out of the room."

"Well but," rejoined the Peer, "is she still alive?"

"Alive, my Lord!" returned the lady, "aye, and married too! Why she has four children by her second husband, who, they do say, brings up the two she had by her former as if they were his own."

"True, true," cried the Peer, "he was nephew to the old Lord, and took her, that her jointure might fall into the estate. Well, and how does she look—young as ever?"

"Her face is young enough," cried the lady, "since it is put on every morning! But yet how horrid is that!—not corresponding

sponding with the rest of her body ; and——”

“ Aye,” interrupted the General, “ like a new steeple to an old Church ! And then the jewels with which she is loaded——”

“ Not one false, upon my honour,” cried the lady ; “ I know when she bought them—they are inestimable !”

“ And the only thing estimable about her,” continued the General ; “ for her Ladyship, like an Egyptian mummy, is only to be valued for the spices she is preserved in.”

“ Ha ! ha ! ha !” roared out the Peer ; “ take my death, General, but you spare nobody ! What think you, ladies and gentlemen, of the old Lady Purser ?”

“ What,” cried a lady, “ the old fat Dowager who is always spraining her ankle ! Is it she you mean ?”

“Whom else should I mean?” rejoined the Peer. “You, Sir Harry, have seen her dance at Almack’s with a hat and feathers on her head! Tell me, what do you think her like?”

“Like, my Lord,” replied the Baronet, “why, like the moving helmet with the plume in the Castle of Otranto!”

“Well, but her daughter,” cried the General, “the young widow! She, I understand, is a great fortune and a beauty.”

“Let me see,” said the Peer; “her husband has not been dead these three months, so she does not come into company as yet. Prithee, who is to be her second?”

“Her husband’s steward,” replied the General: “he made a fortune out of the estate, and she has no other way of securing her jointure than by having him.”

I have

I have given you this conversation as a specimen of what is mostly heard in the circles of the *beau-monde*. With politics and parties they have little to do ; scandal is their only amusement, and we must confess it is a subject that never tires, but possesses an inexhaustible fund of novelty. Other fashions may only last a season or two, but scandal is one that never dies.

LETTER XIX.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

THE pen is scarcely ever out of my hand, yet cannot all my industry keep pace with the variety of the *beau-monde*. I have no time, however, for preliminary observations, but must hurry you instantly to a new scene.

As my Lord, my Lady, Sir Harry, and myself were at the breakfast-table this
6 morning,

morning, the servant ushered in Colonel —, a man of extreme fashion, and therefore welcome at all times and places. That you may better enter into the spirit of what follows, I will give you a kind of *crayon* sketch of his character. He is a man of birth, fortune, address, and good company; his wit of that fashionable kind, that its spirit and elegance can only be comprehended by people of fashion themselves. He never fails, however, to assist our capacity in this respect; for, lest we should not understand his wit, he is the first to laugh at his own jest. He has written many *jeux d'esprits*, which are as much admired in his own circle as, from envy and other causes, they are ridiculed elsewhere. Besides this, he has been in his time one of the most ardent lovers: his passion, indeed, was such as even the infidelity of his mistress could not extinguish

extinguish ; and when choice or compulsion gave her up into the arms of another, he had the patience to wait her reversion to himself on the death of her first husband.

I have only to add one more trait, which will finish this sketch. As his fortune has put him above any serious employment, and his mind has nothing of that coarseness which delights in what are foolishly called manly pleasures, his time is occupied in being a kind of *caterer* for the circles he moves in, either inventing or chusing some new courses of fashionable pleasures. He is thus a general favourite ; and he no sooner enters a room than every one already anticipates some new proposal, some new prospectus of pleasure and expence.

He

He had no sooner taken his seat, and exchanged the compliments of the morning, than he commenced a conversation agreeable to his character, but which he introduced with an abruptness which sufficiently argued that he had not begun it without design. He lamented the low state of public pleasures, and more particularly the debasement of the Theatres.

“The playhouses,” said he, “as instituted by people of fashion, and still supported only by their patronage, should have no other aim than their diversion. The houses, indeed, are not without a pit and a gallery; but as I have taken pains to gather every necessary information, and have not entered into the proposal I am about to submit without much reflection, I can state it as a fact that the receipt of the boxes is
more

more than treble the remainder of the house. The people of fashion, therefore, are the only supporters of the Theatre. My conclusion from this is, that their entertainment should be consulted in the same proportion. But what is the state of the Theatres of the present day? Can any thing contribute to the diversion of people of fashion but the representation of fashionable life? Can the rusticities of a farmer, or the jests of a village apothecary, excite any thing but disgust in people of our refined taste?—There is another inconvenience,” added he, “ which I should not forget—that of the confusion of all ranks in the promiscuous company of a playhouse; even the boxes are not reserved for ourselves, for every one is admitted who pays his admission. As such,” continued he, “ are our weighty objections against the present
state

state of public amusements, I have taken much thought, and felt much anxiety to contrive a remedy. I find at last, however, the thing admits of nothing but a substitute."

Having delivered this speech with as much gravity as if he were in his place in the House, and addressing it on a *Bill of Rights*, he took a paper from his pocket, the contents of which he read aloud. They were as follow :—

PIC NIC THEATRE.

"Whereas we, the underwritten, having taken into our consideration the low state of public amusements, and the late and sudden fall of the funds of
wit,

wit, have resolved to unite our common efforts and understandings to remedy and redress the same; and being persuaded that nothing can so fully conduce to this point as the forming and exhibiting a model, by the imitation and emulation of which a greater refinement may be obtained, and having for this purpose summoned a rout in the rooms of our trusty and well-beloved Countess of C——, we have unanimously come to the following

RESOLUTIONS.

Resolved, 1st—That a society shall be instituted under the name of the *Pic Nic Theatre*, to be supported by the voluntary contributions, pecuniary and intellectual, of its respective patrons.

“ Resolved, 2dly—That none shall be
admitted

admitted to perform a part in the plays to be represented, but those whose talents have been tried and approved by the general council of its patrons. That no one shall be admitted to act the part of a Lover but Officers of the Guards ; and that no one, under the dignity of Peerage, shall venture upon the part of a Provoked Wife. That, as many country Members of Parliament have already enrolled themselves as patrons of this institution, for the encouragement of these gentlemen, the several parts of Tender Husbands, Constant Lovers, and Justices of the Peace, shall be reserved for them, provided only that this be not construed to extend to the part of Justice Shallow, or that of Scrub, the former of these parts being reserved for a worthy *Alderman* of the city—the latter for a *Nobleman* of high rank.

“ Resolved,

“ Resolved, 3dly—Should any rivalship arise for a preference in any of the aforesaid parts, it shall be determined either according to the seniority of the candidates, in some cases according to the priority of rank, but in every one the first consideration shall be their suitableness to the part proposed.

“ Should two Officers of Guards dispute the part of a lover, the dispute shall be determined by the quality of their commission. Thus a Colonel shall be preferred before a Captain, &c. &c.

“ Should the part of an *injured* husband be disputed between any of the *country Members* and those of the *Aldermen* of the City, whose names have been enrolled as patrons of this institution, the preference shall be given to the Alderman.

“ Should

“ Should any dispute arise with regard to any parts in a tragedy, they shall be regulated by the following rules :—No man shall be capable of being a hero who is under six feet, and has not a commission in the Grenadiers. No man shall be accepted as a second to the hero of the piece, whose stature is under five feet six inches, and who has not a commission in one of the regiments of Guards. No man shall be admitted as a tragic lover under the degree of a Lieutenant-Colonel. It is resolved, moreover, that in those tragedies which require the introduction of *Virgins*, the institution shall seek the necessary supply from the country : the search to be confined to the distance of fifty miles from London, and at least three leagues from the country quarters of any of the dispersed Regulars. Such other characters as the society may
judge

judge rather of a country than town growth, shall be sought within the same distance—such as are those of good fathers, constant mistresses, and wives who would prefer their virtue to the honour of discharging their debts of play.

“ Resolved, 4thly—That, to prevent complaint and confusion, the performers of each sex shall have separate dressing-rooms ; and that in the case of a lady performer, no one but her husband shall be admitted farther than the door of the before-mentioned apartment : and after any female, whether single or married, shall have acted a part in a *sentimental comedy*, her lover shall not be admitted to accompany her into the dressing-room.

“ Resolved, 5thly—A party of the Police
shall

shall be requested to attend; and by the voluntary invitation and consent of every member of the institution, shall undertake the office of compelling obedience to the above-mentioned resolutions.

“Resolved, 6thly—That the thanks of this meeting be given to Colonel —, Sir Lionel Lackwit, the Countess Clackit, the Baroness Flippant, the Right Honourable Lord Froth, the Messieurs Vapid, Brainless, and Dapperwit, and all the honourable and respectable members and patrons of this institution of *Pic Nic*, and that they be requested to continue their laudable and unwearied efforts to complete and support the same, to the end that true wit may again raise its head, and the public taste be refined from its modern corruptions.”

After

After the Colonel had read this with a suitable gravity, we all joined in commendation of the institution, its purport, and resolutions ; we did not, therefore, hesitate to affix our names, and pay our subscriptions. The Colonel then proceeded to inform us that the first representation was fixed for the following Monday, and added that, as the piece was to be succeeded by a supper, it was expected that all the subscribers would furnish a part of the entertainment. My Lord has accordingly sent three bottles of port and a broken pint of Madeira ; but as the butler observed to his Lordship that the company, in the variety of subscriptions for the entertainment, could not know from whom the wine came, my Lord commanded him to select it from the most *vapid* in the cellar. My Lady has, moreover, sent some lemonade, and for the same reason has made
it

it, for the most part, of *tartar* and *sulphur*, rather than of its more usual and more expensive materials. They have not failed, however, to give each other the necessary hint ; and lest either should be poisoned by the other, my Lord has marked his wine, and my Lady her lemonade.

You must not think that there is any meanness in this, for fashion and meanness are contraries ; and therefore, as your brother the Collegian used to say, the existence of the one precludes that of the other.

The Colonel then took from his pocket the play-bill of the first performance.—“ The piece,” said he, “ has been composed for the purpose, and, if I may trust my own judgment, is not unsuited to the company who are to perform in it. The

name of it is *La Belle Assemblée*, or the *Comedy of Fools*. Its dialogue has so much wit, and that wit of so fashionable a kind, that it will not excite the vulgar emotion of a laugh during the whole representation. I have got a prologue, however, which will make some variety in the entertainment of the evening; for, however serious may be the tone of the play, I flatter myself that my prologue will be laughed at, not only by the company present at its delivery, but by the whole town."

My Lady's coach was now at the door, and the Colonel handed us to our seats. My Lady said she was going on business, but did not add whither. I shall break off here for the present, but not conclude my letter till my return.

* * * * *

Well,

Well, my dear, I am now returned, and am sitting down to perform my promise. Endeavour to guess whither we have been, and what was this business of our's? But I defy you to do either. Well then, in one word, we have been to *Bow-Street* to get a *thief-taker*!

“To take up a pilfering servant?” you will say, perhaps.—Not at all, child!—“To recover some stolen lace or stray spoons, perhaps?” No, nor this!—for both butler and lady's-maid are creatures of character!

To explain the mystery, then, my Lady is going to give a fashionable rout; and a thief-taker is as necessary a part of such an assembly as the Speaker is of the House of Commons.

The gentleman who attends upon my Lady for this purpose is an universal favourite with people of fashion ; he is omitted in no general invitation ; and if you examine the list of the visitors at any fashionable party in any of the morning papers, you will be sure to see Mr. J——, the name of this so very *respectable* person, at the head of the Messieurs.

You will enquire, perhaps, the reason of this custom. To confess the truth, it is one of those elegancies of the *beau-monde* which as yet I cannot comprehend. It is a principle in the law that, though the cause of any rule should not appear, the rule shall not on that account be deemed without any ; for as every thing else in the system appears to have a very sufficient one, this general wisdom is carried to account,
and

and every thing is presumed to be *good*, as proceeding from a source which in its ordinary course produces nothing *else*.

It is thus that I shall judge of this, and of many other maxims of the *beau-monde*; and though no reason may be found for many of its usages, I shall never hesitate to presume the best. It is a custom, as I have read, in the cellars of St. Giles's, to have the plates, pots, and spoons of the guests chained to the tables:—perhaps this custom of the *beau-monde* is only an improvement upon this same principle. You must confess that it would not only be inelegant, but inconvenient to make a too exact imitation of this St. Giles's usage: this contrivance, therefore, of the people of fashion has both more facility and, as I think, greater refinement. The security is,

think, greater refinement. The security is, as it were, concealed ; and as this Officer of Fashion and Bow-Street never fails to appear in the same dress with the other of the company, he is never known as a thief-taker until called upon to act as such. You may have read in our Roman History that the axes of the Consuls were always concealed in a bundle of reeds ; so that until the moment of an execution, it had no other appearance than that of a *faggot of sticks*.

It is in the same manner with this Officer of Police ; for though his pockets may be filled with warrants to employ in case of necessity, he walks, talks, bows, and rallies with an air as indifferent, harmless, and fashionable as any beau in the room.

There, my dear, you may see that this
custom

custom is not so indefensible as you might at first imagine. I have heard that the late Empress of Russia instituted public assemblies in Petersburg, and that amongst other rules, she subjected them to the following :—

“ It is further ordered that every apartment, in which such public assembly of the Court and fashion of Petersburg is to be held, shall have a room adjoining to it, in which two *Criminal Judges* shall sit during the whole of the meeting, and that they shall take cognizance of all felonies and misdemeanors which shall there happen ; and that a gallows, stocks, pillories, and whipping-posts being erected at the doors, or before the windows of the house, the aforesaid Judges shall cause all such offenders to be led to immediate punishment, provided

only that, if the offender be a Privy Counsellor, he shall have the right of appealing; and that if the criminal be a lady with the dignity of Nobility, she shall not be condemned to lose her ears in the pillory without being first heard by the Empress in person."

I must here break off, since I am summoned away; but shall not dispatch this letter without having made some additions to this day's lesson.

* * * * *

At breakfast this morning my Lady having dismissed a man-servant, a fellow came to apply for the vacant place. Her Ladyship desired him to be introduced into the parlour. She demanded of him what qualifications he had for her service.

"I have

“ I have always lived, Madam,” said the fellow, “ in fashionable services, and have never yet failed of giving satisfaction. I have only one rule, Madam—that of never having any will, conscience, or principle of my own ; but of being, saying, or doing whatever my master or mistress may please to command.”

“ With such principles, friend,” said my Lord, “ I cannot but wonder to see you still in servitude.”

“ I might have risen in the world, my Lord,” replied the fellow, “ had I always had such ; but I have only gained them by experience, and have therefore not long commenced the practice. I was educated in the country, my Lord ; but have been gradually cured of all its follies and ignorances. In my first place I learned to lie,

having been turned away for saying my master was at home to a poor relation. In my second place I learned to stare in the face of my oldest acquaintance as if I had never seen him before, having been turned away for bowing to the oldest friend of my master at a time when, on an unlucky change of his fortune, my master had chosen to forget him. In my third place I learned to listen to remonstrances without any intention of amendment, having been turned away for listening to the advice of the Chaplain, who remonstrated against my assiduity in the intrigues of my master. In this manner, my Lord, I can *stare*, *lie*, and *listen*. In a word, my Lady, I flatter myself I am suited to your place, if your place is suited to me."

My

My Lord laughed at the fellow's pertness, and commanded him to remain in his service.

I must here finish my letter. Tomorrow we go to the Opera : I will inform you of our entertainment.—Good night !

Your's,

RACHAEL H.

LETTER XX.

From the same to the same.

DEAR JANE,

I AM now writing to you in a state of the utmost astonishment! It is but two hours since we returned from the Opera. I am now writing in bed, and you will read my letter with as much wonder as I shall write it. I will endeavour to relate it all in order.

Having dined and dressed, we drove to the Opera about eight o'clock. We were
shewn

shewn into my Lady's box. The performance had some time begun: this, however, was no loss, for I did not understand a syllable. You will stare at this, but it is nevertheless true. An Opera is a something in a foreign language which every one goes to see, and no one to understand. 'Tis one of the silliest things in nature, for there is nothing in nature like it. To give you only one instance:—one would imagine that a hero was a kind of a greater man; but he is represented at an Opera by *something* that's *less* than man.

The singing pleased me, and I expressed my approbation to the company in our box. My Lady checked me, and whispered in my ear that the person who sung was not in fashion. I was silent immediately; and the next song that was sung by the same character,

character, I put my fingers into my ears, and declared he sung most execrably. The real truth is, that I did not hear a note ; but I heard that he was—out of fashion.

As the performance did not please me, I paid but little attention to it, and threw my eyes around the house in search of that amusement in the audience which I missed in the performers. My attention was at last caught by the box immediately opposite to our own. I observed a gentleman with his eyes fixed on my Lady Varnish. His regards were so fixed, that he did not perceive I remarked him. He changed colour several times—he several times went out of the box, and then as suddenly returned into it again. He fixed his eyes in the same manner as before ; his face underwent every change, sometimes assuming an angry, sometimes
a con-

a contemptuous, but most frequently a tender or passionate expression. For some time I could only observe him with silent astonishment; at length I pulled my Lady by the arm, and desired her to look at him. She immediately turned her eyes as I directed her; but when they met the object, gave a loud shriek, and fell from her seat!

The stranger, whose eyes were fixed upon her, and who, meeting the look she had just given him, had returned it with a kind of passionate jerk of his head, saw her fall, and immediately rushed from his box. My Lord had raised her; and after some time, and with some difficulty, we recovered her from her fit.

While we were thus busied, the stranger appeared at the door of the next box; but
3 seeing

seeing her Ladyship supported by my Lord, again rushed away, shutting the door after him with great violence.

My Lady was now in tears, my Lord in silent surprise, but, as it appeared afterwards, suspicious of the true cause. He had not seen the gentleman, but he had observed my Lady look towards the box, and somebody leaving it with violence and agitation. The attention of the house, however, was now turned upon my Lady; her shriek was heard through every part of it, and some ladies had immediately come forward to assist her recovery. She now desired to return home. My Lord gave his hand in silence, and led her to her carriage. I got up after her. He shut the coach-door, desired the coachman to drive

drive home, and returned himself into the house.

As soon as the coach drove off, she burst into tears. As I really love her, I was much affected, and endeavoured to console her. She gave me a tender embrace, said I was a kind, dear girl, but that she was miserable beyond all repair. She again burst into tears, and seemed to weep with the very bitterness of sorrow. I did not know its cause, but I could not help accompanying her with my own tears. I could not tell what I was weeping for, yet I never wept more heartily in my life.

As soon as my Lady had got home, she retired to bed. I would have followed her to her chamber, but she embraced me, and requested me to leave her to herself.

“ You

“ You will stay up for my Lord, my dear : as for me, I am much easier ; perhaps my misfortune may not be so great as I at first dreaded.”—She then retired.

My Lord returned to supper in about an hour afterwards. As the servants waited, little was said. My Lord was grave ; but appeared, as I imagined, rather thoughtful than dejected.

The supper over, and the servants out of the room, after a short silence my Lord addressed me. He asked me if I saw the gentleman that caused my Lady’s distress. I confessed that I did see him.

“ And what kind of man was he ?” added my Lord.

I described

I described him as exactly as I could. My Lord abruptly exclaimed—"My Lord Winlove, by Heavens!"

He then rose from his seat, and snatched a candle from the table. He took my hand as he passed me, and gently pressing it—" 'Tis from you, my dear," added he, "that I must expect all my future happiness; you will soon have to decide my fate, Madam!"

He then kissed my hand, begged pardon for his abruptness, and retired.

What can be the meaning of all this, my dear?—What can be the affair of my Lady?—What did my Lord mean by this abrupt

abrupt address to me?—Time must unravel it, for I cannot.—Good night at present ; I shall write again very soon.

END OF VOL. I.







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